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SPACE IN MUGHAL MINIATURES

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CERTIFICATE

This is to Certify that the dissertation entitled Space in Mughal Miniature, is a record of the research work done by Anne Jeyasingh, (Full time Scholor 1991-92) under my supervision, in the Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Madras 600 086. It has not previously formed the basis for the award to the candidate of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship of other similar titles.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of space has changed considerably and radically in the thought of man from ancient times until now. According to the Greeks it was realistic and was thought that

> "Space is an attribute of existing matter and that things take their beginning in it."[1]

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1. Dorota Folga and Januszewska, (eds.) Concepts of Space in Contemporary Art (India : Abhinav Publications, 1991), p. 583.

Aristotle's concept of space was

> "In relation to place, he spoke of space as the proper place of things... three dimensional but not infinite because it is contained within a body."[2]

While Galileo Galilee's concept of space was that it was infinite and our understanding of it

> "lies in our tendency to think of it in finite terms"[3]

However, dimensions of space determine the expanse of universe or the world in which we exist. At a rather intimate and more definable level it is the area, room, extent or place within particular limits. Space also refers to the continuous extension and also to intervals between objects.

As man's very existance takes place in space, his experience of it is unavoidable. Viewing objects and forms in space and in terms of interrelated space is very much a

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2. Idem
3. Idem

part of one's life. In reality, objects or forms are experienced in terms of their existance in space. And space is defined by objects or forms that occupy space. This brings a close communion between the expanse of the universe and the existance of objects in the universe - in other words, between form and space.

One's perceptive power enables him to gauge space mentally in terms of its expanse, its limits and its relationship between objects. This space is also felt in terms of its height, width and depth, in otherwords, in its three dimensions.

Space also refers to the distance between points, forms, words or lines on a two - dimensional plane. The area or extent between one line and the other experienced in terms of its height and width is two-dimensional space. Lines or forms that appear on such a surface conform to two-dimensions. However, an

ingenious placement of lines and forms on a two-dimensional surface can create an illusion of three-dimensional space. An artist is often confronted with this problem, as, using a two-dimensional plane he strives to capture the illusion of three-dimensional space.

When an artist creates a visual expression of space, he employs certain devices to create it on his two-dimensional surface. Methods such as the unvanishing or mystic perspective, the herringbone perspective, the multiple perspective and in the early fifteenth century geometrical perspective have been employed to project effects of three-dimensional space. Over the years different devices have been used, of which the single point perspective or converging perspective is most popular till today.

Mughal miniature paintings display a dexterous use of an array of devices that help project an illusion of space. The extent of interaction between other schools of painting has

greatly widened the arena of devices employed in its own school.

Beginning from the Persian School, use of superimposed forms, creation of space cells of receptacles and a combination of direct and bird's-eye views are discernible. Ancient Buddhist elements in the use of hierarchical perspective and its frequent use of direct and bird's-eye view in combination are predominant features. The use of reverse perspective is derived from Chinese examples, while the Western concept of converging point perspective, receeding background and modelling of forms prove strong European influence.

Mughal miniature painting is an off-shoot of Persian art in India, nurtured by the indigenous tradition of painting. Persian art emerged in various places and was influenced by various schools of painting. However, when it finally took roots in India, it fused with the indigenous style prevalent in the region and germinated profusely, forming a class of its own. Its branches spread high and wide, blossoming into a glorious art that engulfed the entire region in its spell.

It is evident that Mughal Miniature paintings drew their inspiration from the Safavid style, a popular school of Persian Art. This Persian style has left an indelible mark on Mughal art. It portrays a combination of aerial and direct views, eschews shading and makes use of brilliant mosaic like pure colours. It restricts natural elements such as trees, cliffs, mountains and sky to a few types. It makes use of intricate patterns and its sky is painted in deep blue or in gold. At times, it is relieved with clouds that are indicated in the Chinese manner. The illustrations are mostly two-dimensional in character.

The Persian school of painting in itself is a mixture of two styles, the Chinese and the Mongol style. Since the Mongol invasion of Persian and China in the early thirteenth century, relationship between the two countries was well established. By the end of fourteenth

century this continuously and mutually fostered relationship had produced a profound effect on the arts of both China and Iran. Further, trade and commerce between the two countries was strengthened and paved the way for ample exchange of ideas.

As great numbers of native Indian painters were called into the Imperial Mughal courts, it was natural for the Safavid style to undergo certain amount of Indianisation, forming the 'Mughal Style'. Characteristic Indian features are portrayed in the typical gestures of hands facial types, stylised representation of trees, foliage and flowers and mounds of earth. Rendering of water with groups of lines, half submerged aquatic creatures at times leaping, with occasional indication of lotus plants are also notable. Rounded forms, rhythmic figures of animals and birds and the use of hierarchical perspective are all derived from Indian tradition.

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Besides the hybridisation of Persian and Indian Styles, other far extending influences are also detectable. Western influence in the use of convergent perspective, was widely noticable in landscape backgrounds. But its application was never consistent as all objects were never drawn from a single focal point. European influence is seen in the shading technique conveying the impression of volume. But this also was adopted only in depicting certain objects. Paintings done by Mukund and Manohar may be noted for a better understanding of Western technique of painting especially when they have preferred a diagonal view of buildings, heavy modelling, thick shaded lines, heavily folded drapery and greatly diminished distant landscape.

It is hence evident that the Mughal school of painting is a rich composition of several traditional styles. And still these diverse elements are mixed and blended well, preparing

an integrated style that has evoked considerable interest among men all over the world. The extent of interaction among the different styles was altered with every Emperor who brought in new influences from different sources.

Babur, a Muslim of the Sunni sect born in Ferghana in 1483, was only fourteen when he ascended the throne. He was deeply concerned with people and nature and his books portray many telling descriptions of mankind as well as of flora and fauna. The lively biography on Babur reveals his outlook and provides an insight into his way of life. However this book entitled 'The Baburnama', was not done under his patronage.

Humayun, born in 1530 was the first documented patron of Mughal painting. He had great difficulty in trying to regain his inherited territory from his constant threats, Sher Khan the Afghan Chief and his brothers Hindal Mirza

and Kamran.

When Sher Shah forced Humayun to flee his empire he sought refuge in Iran under the Safavid ruler Šhah Tahmasp, with whose support he succeeded in recapturing Hindustan. His short sojourn in the Safavid Court in 1544, kindled the first source of inspiration of Mughal art history. Humayun admired the Persian paintings and in 1546 when Shah Tahmasp's interest towards painting was shifted to other interests, Humayun invited the two Safavi artists to join his court. These were the most famous initiators and formulators of the Mughal School of painting, Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd-us-Samad.

Mir Sayyid Ali was the best court painter gifted with the skill of making accurate observations and precise representations of shapes and textures Abd-us-Samad was less gifted but far more appreciated and enjoyed great favour from the

Emperor. Abd-us-Samad excelled in protraiture and achieved great renown as an instructor.

Akbar was the main source of inspiration for the significant performance of the Mughal Artists. His valour and strength and dynamic talent as a soldier enabled him to expand his empire and exercise his power as the greatest Mughal Emperor. When he ascended the throne as a young boy, Bairam Khan, one of his father's most able generals, assisted him.

Akbar associated himself with the nicities of other religions. He permitted Hindus to occupy important governmental posts, abandoned the enslavement of Hindu prisoners of war and abolished taxes levied on non-muslims and pilgrims. Taking a radically new step, he also married a

Hindu princess, the daughter of Raja Bihar Mal of Amber. This further strengthened his relationship with the Hindus cementing every crack and crevice of disunity between the two major religions at the time.

He founded the new sect, the Din-i-ilahi or Divine faith which his close associates joined. Though he was an illiterate he always associated himself with the learned and acquainted himself with prose and poetry. His keen interest in painting initiated him to study the art of painting under Abd-us-Samad and Mir Sayyid Ali.

Under Akbar's personal guidance and initiative several illuminated manuscripts were planned during his reign. Akbar showed great interest in ancient Sanskrit literature and ordered their translation into the Persian language accompanied by suitable illuminations.

Various Hindu classics, such as the Razmnama, Mahabaratha, Ramayana or Harivamsa. This lead to active indigenisation of the Persian style. Besides, influence from the West also set in during Akbar's reign.

Jahangir, born in 1605 was a very human autocrat capable of touching kindness and outstanding aesthetic judgement. He had pictures painted of exotic animals and beautiful flowers. He was greatly interested in arts and some of the most splendid creations in arts were made during his reign.

Shah Jahan, was born in 1628, and under his reign, building activity flourished, but painting underwent a down set. The excellence of Jahangir's court descended to a fairly lower level till after him there was a total decline.

Interaction with different schools brought

new influences, from the Persian, Chinese and European traditions. Besides, it also adopted certain influences from the indigenous style. Hence, space concept understood and expressed by these traditions had a strong bearing on the Mughal style as may be gleaned from this dissertation.

The first chapter of this dissertation examines the space created by superimposing figures at different levels, suggesting a sense of varying distances. Mughal artists proved to be consummate in composing.

In the second chapter, space created by the use of space cells or receptacles is studied. This provides the eye with an illusion of recessional depth and also movement. Besides, forms are orgainsed with particular receptacles. With an ingenious use of bird's-eye view, Mughal artists creat more space to place forms.

The use of Hierarchical perspective is

analysed in the third chapter. It involves the introduction of unusual elements such as isolation of main figure and wreath formation around the chief character to ensure easy recognisability of the protagonist member. It also includes the placement of figures according to their order of importance or protocol.

Experience of near and distant space is the aspect of scrutiny in the fourth chapter. European influence in the use of diminishing forms, blurred effects, and use of less intense colours in creating an illusion of distant space is discussed here. Modulation of colours and the use of converging parallels in creating three-dimensional space is also analysed in this chapter.

The fifth chapter deals with the Mughal love for aesthetics. As a result of which, Mughal painters often sacrificed natural space

experience. The love for splendour and decoration lead to its enriched surface and hence an 'aesthetic' space emerged.

To the viewer trained in Western experience of space, it is adventurous to survey the Mughal space with its array of spatial types. It is hoped that a close examination of the Mughal concepts of space will provide an enriching experience.

CHAPTER-I

JUXTAPOSITION AND SUPERIMPOSITION

Perception of space today is most often related to the Western concept of space, imposing certain difficulty in understanding the Mughal concept. Yet as we shall presently see, our 'experience' of space is similar to that of the Mughal use of space.

Persian art was greatly influential in shaping the style of Mughal miniatures. Its flourishing influence brought with it a rich deposit of Persian tradition into Mughal paintings. The imperial school of painting itself was initiated by Mughal Emperors whose ardent love for art helped produce a prolific output of paintings.

Persian paintings project simple

compositions with few essential figures grouped in small numbers of two or three. They were imaginatively placed at different levels on the scene with occasional overlapping of forms and hiding of objects behind mountains, plants or architectural members. This provides an airy, breezy atmosphere that surrounds the small groups of figures, flora and fauna. The consistent concern of Persian style was presenting two-dimensional figures without any trace of modelling to suggest three-dimensional volume. These were set against an equally two-dimensional background with very little or no modelling and without the use of Western convergent perspective to suggest depth.

The continuously augmented demand for miniature paintings by the Emperor could not be satiated by the two Persian artists. More artists from the homeland had to be employed

in the Mughal court. These artists worked under the guidance of the two major Persian artists, Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd-us-Samad, learning the new technique and style till now alien to them. Soon they excelled in the acquired Persian style of painting, but infused into it certain characteristic traits of Indian painting. Heightened drama, animated movement and vitality imparted a touch of realism to the Mughal paintings. Compositions were replete with details and were most frequently balanced in arrangement.

Recurring features of the Persian tradition are visible in the Mughal style in the placement of forms and use of superimposed forms. Mostly Western use of perspective was abandoned. Yet, through compositional grouping of forms, superimposition, juxtaposed forms and abrupt cutting or hiding of forms a sense of depth, incomprehensible to the Western eye was achieved.

Fig. 1 The presentation of a book by Sadi.

An illusion of receeding space was effected in the arrangement and placement of forms. Certain amount of depth was obtained and a relationship established in space. 'The presentation of a book by Sadi', which forms part of a larger painting expreses a respect for spatial design. (Fig. 1) This painting marks a revelation of a simple process of displaying forms in space. Placed at various levels on a wide expanse of grassland, nine advancing dervishes insinuate a sense of distance and space in the scene. Distance between forms is portrayed by the ample amount of space between them. Their placement at different levels distinguishes the difference in ground level.

Forms laid in close juxtaposition direct the speculative mind to sense interrelated space, and make a subconcious specification of their position in space. Gradually, the cognitive capacity of man encourages him to relate to

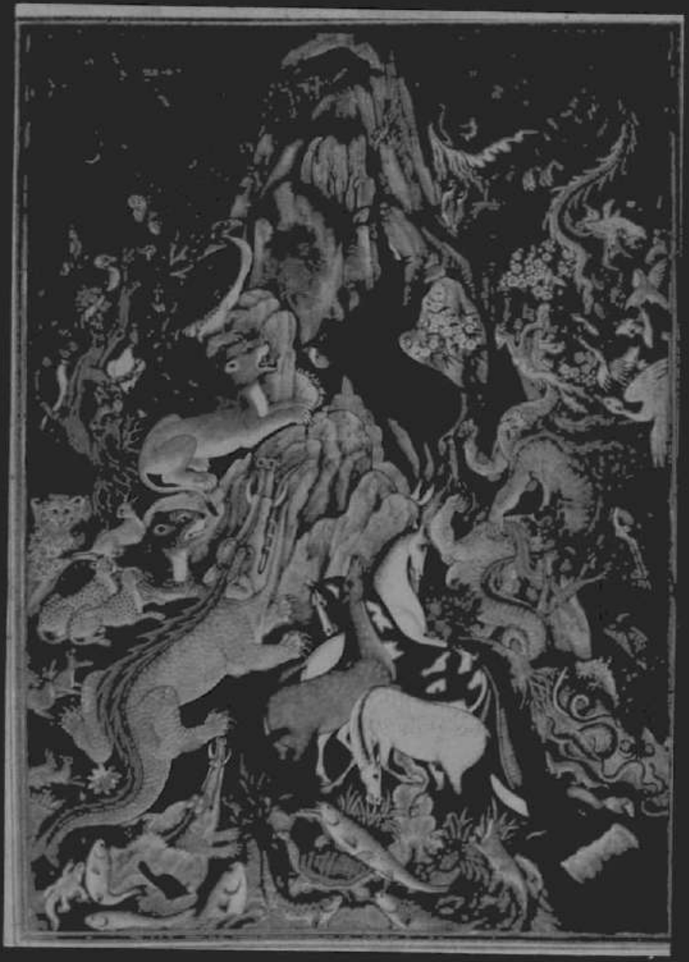


Fig. 2 A Raven Addressing the Assembled Animals.

them in terms of near and far forms, and also experience space that exists between and around it. Such an experience is evidenced in the painting, 'The presentation of a book by Sadi'.

'A Raven addressing the assembled animals', shows a compact mountain setting with a wide assortment of real and unreal animal forms.(Fig. 2) A restrained indication of waterbody at the base and the high peaked mountain, provide an abode for acquatic creatures, animals and birds. Interspersed, interlocking trees and rocks set the stage for the animated discussion in progress.

The tightly packed composition from the foot of the mountain to its peak has little suggestion of receeding space. However, their placement at different levels in water, mountain, trees or flying in the limited expanse of sky establishes them in related space. Placed at

varying levels of height one is encourged to see them in definite relationship with the space they occupy and also in relationship with each other. In reality super imposition of forms takes place when forms lying along the same vertical axis fall at different ground levels. With a slight shift from the vertical axis to the right or left, forms lying behind the closest form become partially visible. Hence, when super imposed forms, form closely packed groups, a definite relationship between them can be realised. The group of horses in the central foreground is indicative of the relationship with each other in space. The bluish grey horse is followed by the brown one, and next by the spotted brown horse and finally there is the white horse. Overlapping forms of animals, set in small groups appear in specific relation with each other.

While the closely placed forms in the miniature, 'A raven addressing the assembled animals', reveals a cluttered atmosphere,

Fig. 3 Prince Salim in the Polo Field

'Prince Salim in the Polo field', expresses an uncluttered airy space.(Fig. 3) Ingenious placement of forms and superimposition are the devices used to heighten the effects of receeding space. This straightforward composition showing a game of polo, with the field being punctuated by sportsmen and attendants from base to mid region, reveals distance between forms. Sufficient amount of empty space witnessed between forms is read as interval space, which can be determined only by the presence of forms. Space recession occurs along the open space and forms placed along vertical lines, leading the eye till the edge of the architectural structure. Besides creating a sense of receeding space in the painting, the widely spaced forms are offered enough area for action and movement involved in the game. Sufficient amount of open space provided in the painting is so vital in fulfilling the thematic content of the painting. Hence the open space seems to be well integrated into

Fig. 4 Encounter between the hostile but related Panduidi and Kuruidi Families.

the painting.

In general, forms which overlap are considered to be near and forms on which overlapping takes place has the appearance of being further away from our sight. The overlapping and the overlapped have definite relations in space. At times, however, the Mughal artists painted contrary to this logic, as may be seen in the painting, 'Encounter between the Hostile but related Panduidi and Kuruidi Families',(Fig. 4)

In their visual representation, forms that are in the foreground are placed closer to the base of the picture plane and those behind further away, showing difference in ground levels and distances. But contrary to to this logic, we will notice superimposed parts of the further object on the closer one. This is obvious only when one has a closer look at the composition. Contradictory

overlapping of garment is noticed to the right background in the group of four figures. The edge of the white garment worn by the man in the background overlaps the orange one worn by the man in front of him. In so doing, he refutes the pictorial language of art and the placement of forms in three-dimensional space. Movement caused by such superimposition lead the eye in a too and fro direction, moving in and out of the scene. As such, superimposition occurs in rare instances and only in limited proportions, it is not easily visible and hence not annoying in the painting.

Forms superimposed along a vertical line rise up from base upwards easily and instantaneously causing a simple transition from foreground to background areas. It provides a quick springing movement into the picture plane ensuring rapid experience of receeding space as witnessed in the paiging, 'Ceremony of the

Fig. 5 Ceremony of the Review of troops.

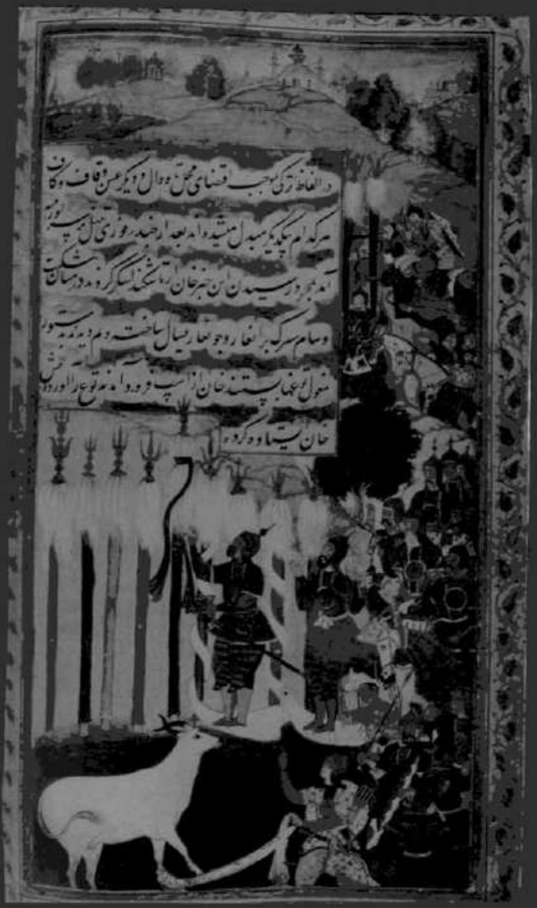


Fig. 6 Baki Chagani Swears his Loyalty to Babur.

Reviews',(Fig. 5) Figures superimposed along a vertical line rise from base into the scene along the right edge. But the sudden movement into the scene is curtailed and checked by horizontal sections formed by the cow, the nine standards, the large inset inscription and mountainous setting. As a result, the impetus with which the eye travels along the vertical line is dramatically lessened, and carried along the horizontal lines across the breadth of the picture plane. So, spatial experience which is recessional is controlled.

Superimposed forms placed along horizontal lines lead the eye into the depth of the picture plane slowly in stages. 'Baki Chagani Swears his loyalty to Babur', presents forth right bands of overlapping forms.(Fig. 6) It rises in horizontal stages of rows of figures, tent walls and sky, one overlapping the other. While the whole area is sandwiched between open

spaces in the foreground and further background regions.

Movement ensured by superimposition is witnessed in the painting, but it rises along strong horizontal divisions reducing its force. As horizontal lines have properties of static quality, the thrust into the scene is restrained and measured. Sharp sections of line and colour restrain rapid movement and permit only a gradual transition into the depth of the scene. Besides, rows formed by individual forms attract much attention at each stage before directing the eye along its inward journey into the scene. Only the 'U' formation of men within the inner court encourages a slight speedy movement into the painting. Abrupt slicing of forms along the picture frame and forms hidden behind frontal objects, suggests the feeling of continued space. The eye and mind complete the incomplete visual image. In the painting, 'Baki Chagani swears his loyalty to Babur', forms cut along

Fig. 7   Scene from the Siege of Rantambhor.

the edge of the picture and the row of men hidden from waist downward help one to continue the image mentally, and thus experience indicative space. Besides, three trees in the background extend their foliage into the border, suggesting a sense of continued space.

Diagonal placement of forms suggest action and swift movement. At an angle it spans simultaneously the depth in the picture plane as well as the breadth. At times, the line is broken and staggered or expanded as may be seen in the painting entitled, 'Scene from the Siege of Rantambhor'. (Fig. 7) The sharp diagonal swings the eye across the scene from one side to the other and from base to top. Overlapping forms ranged along the diagonal section provides a guided movement into the scene and beyond. Starting at the bottom left with an expanding crowd, maximum concentration is seen in the lower half of the diagonal.

Fig. 8 Hunt in the Alisheng Mountain.

The passage narrows acutely to the centre and widens along the left side as it goes higher into the scene. The tightly packed forms clamber up the steep mountain showing much gesticulation. Fighting against this sharp major diagonal are the interesting diagonals of the canons in the upper left corner. This feature of intersecting diagonals may be seen in other paintings as well. The painting imparts an instant genuine feeling of receeding space, marked by a firm sense of balance. Two triangular areas to the top left and bottom right anchor the sharp diagonal in its place.

A compact diagonal in 'Scene from the Siege of Rantambhor' causes a deliberate and forceful recession into space. The contained space in the painting intensifies the force and hastens movement. Though similar movement and space recession is experienced in the, 'Hunt in the Alisheng mountain', it is witnessed at an altered pitch. (Fig. 8)

Several superimposed diagonals formed by various elements such as men, animals, rocks and trees accent the directional axis in the painting. Closely resembling, 'The Scene of the Siege of Rantambhor', in its use of sharp diagonal, it shows variance in space experience. Tightly compacted space in the previous painting is released into areas of open space with well spaced forms. This is the result of space experienced between and around forms.

Strongly incessant diagonals stretching from left to right reinforce each other, while another set of diagonals inserts itself at nearly a ninety degrees angle. This is in restless opposition with the first one. They come in contact with each other towards the centre of the picture plane forming a 'V' one within the other. A vertical line can be run through the points of intersection in the centre, causing an illusory divisioning of the scene.

Fig. 9 Babur Fights with the Zakhreitsi Tribes.

Alternating rows of deer, rocks and figures form strings of diagonal courses spanning the height, breadth and depth of the picture plane. Alternation removes monotony, while repetition of line creates a pulsating beat, rhythm and harmony.

A diagonal formation catapults movement into the scene, offering instant space recession. However, compositional arrangement along an 'S' curve guides the eye in an undulating zig-zig, ensuring a controlled and well ordered movement into the scene, as witnessed in 'Babur fights with the Zakhreitsi Tribes'. (Fig. 9) Cautious superimposition and calculated form arrangement help the eye to make a positive assessment of their depth in space.

A subtle change in the space distribution with a cluster of forms along the right edge

causes a rushing movement. It is balanced and lessened by the well spaced forms in the rest of the curving form. Movement is forceful yet deliberate, surcharged with vitality essential in defining a battle scene. A swirving inward momentum obtained in the placement of horses and soldiers is broken, only to be closed by a tree.

The dynamic relationship between figures is complete and intergrated due to skillful superimposition. Each form is related to and has a dynamic influence on its neighbour. A removal of any element from its rightful place will affect the rhythm in creation.

Through superimposition and well manipulated juxtaposition of forms, space recession or an experience of three-dimensional space is formed. Yet, often the amount of space provided between forms is rather insufficient and limited. Forms that are near are in cadence to that

Fig. 10 Jahangir in Durbar.

which is immediately behind. Implied space between forms is insufficient for their existance. The three-dimensional mass and volume of each form is hence challenged at this juncture.

This is frequently perceived among a cluster of human forms, huddled together in limited space. Space relationship between head and shoulder of figures and the depth of the body from front to back, is put to question. Three-dimensional mass of individual forms experienced in reality is reduced to two-dimensional shapes.

Forms are fittingly composed. They are amassed within limited space and convey a sense of crowd and lively participation. A suitable example is 'Jahangir in Durbar'.(Fig. 10) Such representation is very common among durbar scenes, court scenes and at times in battle scenes.

Fig. 11 Jahangir embracing his son Shahjahan.

Fig. 12 Three Officials of Muhammed Shah's Court.

Portraits of Emperors were popular in the Mughal court. Artists painted portraits of government officials and durbar scenes, immortalising every member holding position in the royal court. Such paintings gave artists an oppurtunity to reveal their skill in portraiture.

'Jahangir embracing his son Shah Jahan', is a rough sketch of detailed portrait studies. (Fig. 11) The artists prime concern was to include the portraits of many figures as required in the composition. As a result, he has made subsequent bust studies in vertical or slightly diagonal rows. Space alloted for each figure is insufficient.

Much emphasis lies on the portrait busts in the sketch 'Three officials of Muhammad Shah's Court'.(Fig. 12) We will notice that the three figures are placed in an ascending sequence on the picture plane. Strong vertical accents are formed by the three figures. The

orientation of their heads forms a diagonal and there is certain amount of open space between the heads. This provides apparent indication of receeding space, and the open space between head and shoulders is indicative of intermediary space. The angle of inclination witnessed at the top of their heads is maintained along the waist bands continuing the illusion of receeding space. Yet at ground level, they no longer retain this angle of inclination. The drapery of all three figures terminate more or less together forming a horizontal line at the base. Superimposition of forms, intermediary space, and the angle of inclination dictate that the three figures stand one behind the other along a diagonal axis. This implies that the three forms will be placed at different ground levels. Thus, here they are along the same ground level forming a horizontal line at the base. Are they of different heights and at the same ground level?

This idea is contradicted because the three figures overlap each other. One might question the ambiguity in understanding space relations of forms. However, this does not show a lack of space comprehension nor does it reveal a shortcoming in naturalistic representation. The artist's prime concern was to capture a true facial likeness of his sitter. This is well depicted. By partially overlapping forms, he suggested space between them and also prevented a rigid frontal composition. The remaining part of the figure, was merely added on to the portrait bust study, completed in terms of relevant drapery rather than in terms of interrelated space.

The peripheral idea of juxtaposing forms and superimposition was derived from the Persian tradition, where forms are placed at different ground levels on the picture plane and grouped in small numbers with certain amount of overlapping. This leads to specific relationship between near and far forms and invests the

painting with three-dimensional space experience. When the Mughal artists employed similar devices to portray space recession and space experience, more dynamic and astounding effects have resulted.

Mughal paintings provide optical illusion of distance and depth, three-dimensional space and recession into the picture plane. The eye is set in motion and is guided differently in each painting according to the placement of forms. Force and tension are portrayed through multifarious placement of forms. A sense of static formalism is conveyed in paintings of durbar scenes, while action, dynamic movement or violent force is witnessed in scenes depicting outdoor games, hunt and battle scenes. Organisation of forms by several methods causes suitable movement in the painting. It is employed as required to best convey the theme portrayed. The eye sees and analyses the type of space created and the extent of movement portrayed in the scene, while the mind meditates on this visual space.

CHAPTER-II

RECEPTACLES

Usage of space defined within particular limits is called space cells. The use of space cells or receptacles in creating an illusion of space is the next popular device common among Safavid paintings. This is another device of creating space used by the Mughal school.

Space cells or receptacles are formed by mounds of earth, often covered by lush green vegetation, or by rivers, rivulets, streams or rocks, enfringing foliage or trees and also by architectural members such as tents, palace walls and even carpets. The picture plane is thus divided into several small units, alloting particular areas for specific action. They also serve as an appropriate setting for the theme portrayed.

Often relationship between figures placed within particular limits extends beyond the space cell, while at times, action is restricted and isolated within each space cell having no connection with the others.

Forms superimposed or placed at different levels on the picture plane create an illusion of receeding space. This effect is maintained even when receptacles are formed. Overlapping mounds of earth or rocks form receptacles rising into the picture plane in specific stages of horizontal or zig zagging sections. Due to their placement one above the other on the painting, the mind interprets them as forms receeding in space. Depending on their placement, they could direct the eye into the scene, slowly pausing at certain points, or hurriedly rushing into the scene with an urgency causing dynamic movement.

A simple overlapping turf ground provides

Fig. 13 Mughal Prince in the hunting Field.

Fig. 14 Acclamation of Nine Standards.

the setting for the painting, 'Mughal Prince in the Hunting Field', (Fig. 13) Intersecting earth mounds differentiated by colour modulation form a rigid, simple arrangement of space cells. Rising one above the other in a set rhythm, they house men and animals within small units, specifying the area allotted for each figure. The colour relationship, the repetitive definition of space and the systematic placement of forms, unify the scene despite the sharp space divisions made in the painting. Forms placed behind one another and overlapping forms suggest space recession while the distant trees painted in a smaller scale receed into the background.

When a physical line is drawn between nearer and more distant objects, those behind seem pushed to the background. This may be seen in the painting, 'Acclamation of Nine Standards'.(Fig. 14) Cliffs and trees form a calculated curving line in the middle ground,

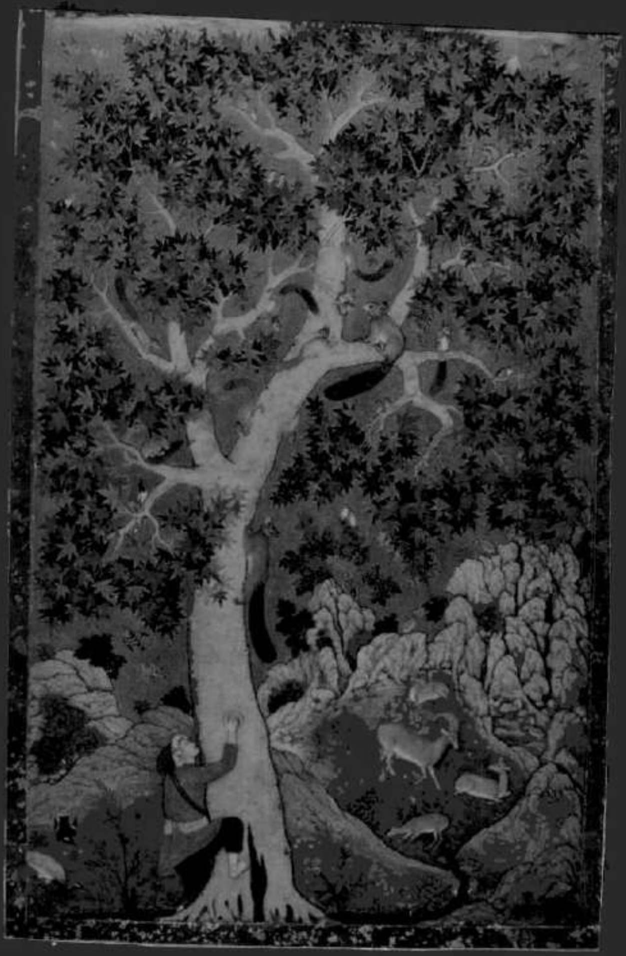


Fig. 15 The Chenar Tree.

segmenting foreground forms from those in the background. The group of armed soldiers, a cow and nine standards fill the first space cell, while armed soldiers mounting horses and camels fill the second one. With more than half the picture space allotted for the first space cell, forms are comfortably placed in this area. In the subsequent half, teeming crowds are tightly sandwiched between cliffs and trees both in front and behind them. Cliffs in the background are silhouetted against a clear blue sky.

Overlapping diagonal lines indicating the ground, ensure space recession while forms placed at different ground levels imply intermittant space. This may be seen in the painting, 'The Chenar Tree'.(Fig.15) This beautiful miniature is an idiom in simple composition. Here, a rock enfrigged mound of earth, cuts across the scene from behind the tree forming the first space cell. A smaller mound extends into the right foreground perfectly fitting into the edge

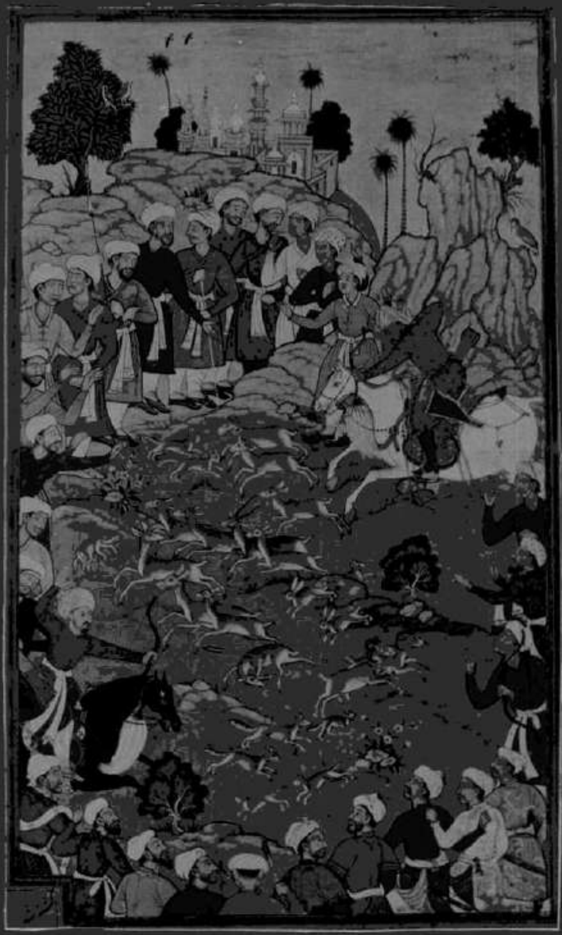


Fig. 16 Deer hunt in Ali-Shang and Alangar Mountains.

of the neighbouring mound. Elegant plants and graceful birds occupy this space. The second space cell that follows immediately seems to be at a lower ground level. The slope of the first earth mound imbues effects of additional height, as against the slope of the second space cell. Craggy rocks with springing trees outline the area forming a sharp silhouette against the gold sky.

Here again, one will notice specific space allocation made for forms in the foreground and for the animals. Both units provide a natural setting which is so vital to position the magnificient Chenar Tree. Such specification invests the painting with effects of perfect organisation and order. Yet, the naturalistic space division in this painting mellows the technical properties of space cells and their chief function.

The painting 'Deer Hunt in Ali-Shang and Alangar Mountains' is struck by a sharp note of dramatic space orgainsation.(Fig.16) Within the narrow vertical painting, human figures enter a wreath

formation around the startled, flee ing animals. The unusual fence like circular positioning of figures draws attention to the central activity - the hunt. Here repetitive, overlapping and diagonally placed animals forms set the eye in a pendulum movement within the circular space cell.

The focus of the painting lies in the helpless plight of the animals and on the sporting Emperor who advances into the circle ready to release an arrow. Hence the space cell formed by human forms, unusual and unnatural in conception, helps establish the point of interest with utmost simplicity and emphasised clarity.

Rivers, rivulets, streams and city walls can also be used ingeniously to create space division. These become part of the landscape and blend harmoniously into the setting. Depending on their blend and curve, they may provide a dynamic or prolonged experience of space recession.

Fig. 17 Khusrau Shah paying homage to Babur at Dushi near Kabul.

The painting 'Khusrau Shah paying homage to Babur at Dushi near Kabul' establishes a simple space cell created by a deeply curving stream.(Fig. 17) The swiftly moving gurgling river appears from the centre, disappearing behind the homage paying Khusrau and his companions. Encircling the main characters it reappears from the left edge of the picture plane, isolating them from the remaining group of attendants. Most figures look or turn in the direction of the chief incident both within and beyond the space cell.

Divided space units isolate and focus attention on the homage paying incident. The visual barrier imposed by the narrow stream, withdraws the figures into the space cell; this provides an illusion of distance. Such space experience is offered solely by the dividing element or the visual barrier formed by the stream. The deeply curving stream, closely spaced figures and limited open space move the eye along the space across the painting.

Fig. 18 Khoja Seyaran Spring in the vicinity of Kabul.

rather than into its depth.

In the painting, 'Khoja Seyaran Spring in the vicinity of Kabul', the diagonally flowing stream causes an energetic inward movement.(Fig. 18) Three evenly spaced trees in a counter diagonal offer puissant support, balancing the forceful movement of the stream. Instructing and working men are seggregated on either side of the stream.

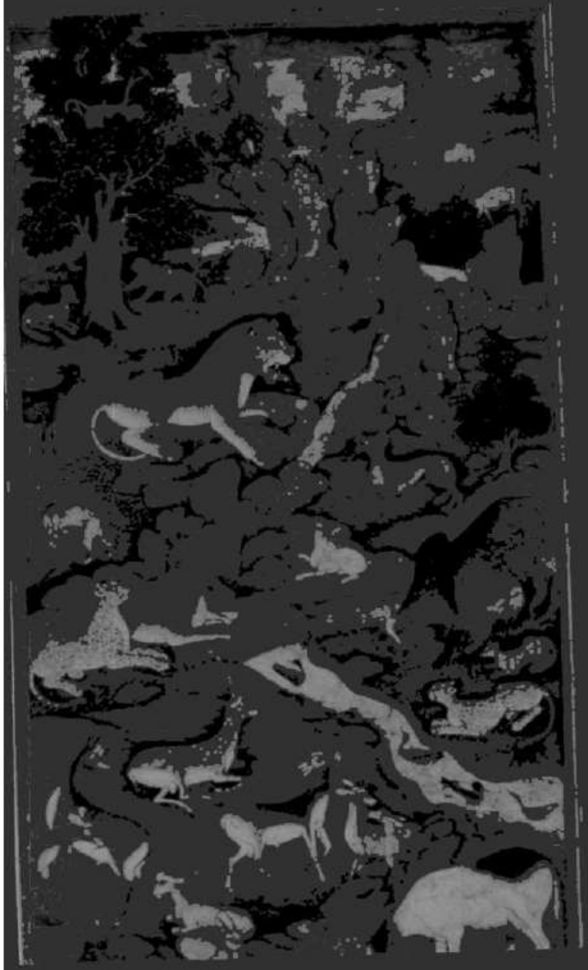
According to the direction and nature of lines dividing the space, the quality of space experience is altered. As against the previous painting (Fig. 17) here, in 'Khoja Seyaran Spring in the vicinity of Kabur', a dynamic recessional space is witnessed. The diagonal stream and counter diagonal trees direct the eye into the depth of the painting.

A diagonal 'S' curve formed by the city

Fig. 19 The Janhar

wall is flanked on either side by the two rival groups in the miniature painting, 'The Janhar'.(Fig. 19) Several brightly coloured tents fill the lower section. In the upper section, one large building stands magnificiently on tall rocks. Numerous elements such as the canons and soldiers in the first space cell point towards the Rajput ladies who throw themselves into the flames during the Siege of Chitor. The emotional content is worked to a high pitch in the second space cell, in the further end of the painting. The claustrophobic atmosphere evoked by closely crammed forms has the capacity to capture and retain one's attention. The intensity of the sorrowful event is instantly felt. The solidity and bulkness of forms skillfully cancels much space recession, augmenting the tense moment portrayed. Thus dexterously placed forms having a meaningful relationship in space heighten the emotional impact of the event.

Fig. 20 The Assembly of Animals.



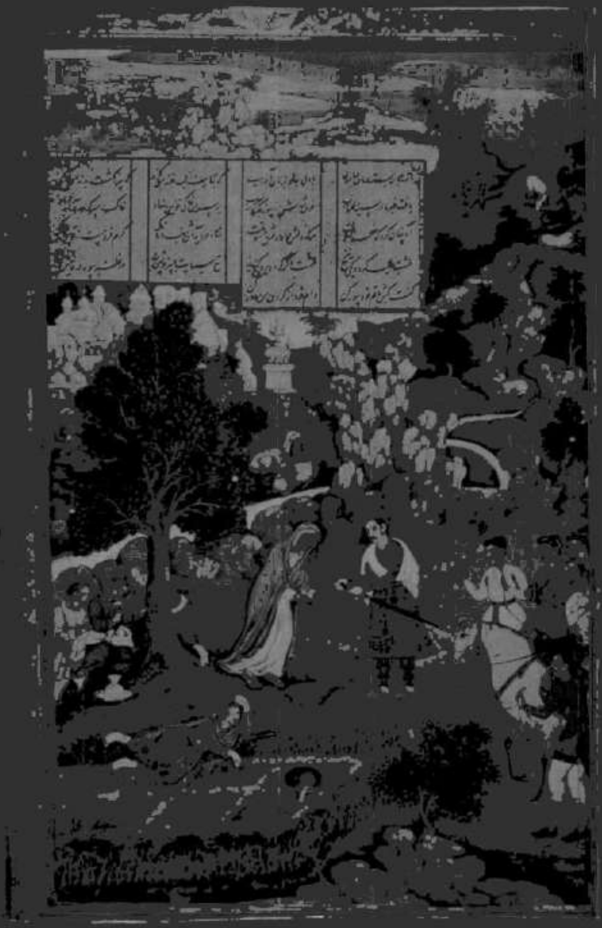


Fig. 21 Rendering of Justice.

A number of zig-zagging units are formed by several elements such as rocks, earth mounds, a stream and trees in the miniature, 'The assembly of Animals'.(Fig. 20). The landscape is divided into multiple units from top to bottom and is punctuated by a variety of wild animals, guiding the eye into the scene. Forms organised along the meandering stream and staggered rocks emphasise the vertical axis. Therefore, movement in the painting also travels along the vertical axis. The landscape is organised into 'regions of space' with the help of natural elements that merge with the setting. An interplay of interspersed animals and open space provide apparent balance between form and space.

Similar in composition is the painting, 'Rendering of Justice'.(Fig. 21) Craggy rocks with springing trees edge the banks of the meandering river. Elements such as a stream,

rocks, trees form space cells.

The background region witnesses small units, while in the foreground large amount of space is allotted to delineate the tense moment. A note of sharp anticipation seems suspended as the crowd eagerly awaits the announcement of the old woman's decision. Figures in the foreground, tall rocks in the central region and the numerous space divisions prolong movement and sustain interest in the painting.

The speed of movement into the scene operates according to the type of receptacles formed. Forms placed at different ground levels and overlapping elements ensure an experience of space recession. The ultimate experience is close to three-dimensional space. With these simple space cells, the message conveyed becomes instantly apparent. The emotional content of the event narrated and

Fig. 22 Babur Captures a flock of sheep from the Hazaras.

the suspense of the moment portrayed has been organised with utmost care in Fig. 21 using space cells.

In the painting, 'Babur Captures a Flock of sheep from the Hazaras', overlapping rocks define space units.(Fig. 22) The foreground frame boldly slices the advancing elephants and horses. In the central space cell, Babur is seen conversing with his attendants who arrive with a flock of sheep. In the right middle ground, men arrive with sheep. The left middleground has two mounted attendants, while in the distant background is an impetously moving man with bow and arrow in hand. The city scene is replete with architectural structures with domed and tiled roofs.

Forms drawn on different planes imposed one upon another continue to be visible even behind tall objects, such as rocks, trees and

walls. In other words, superimposed forms appear to rise one behind the other. Does this signify that forms are placed on a sloping ground? If so, when the ground line in the foreground is higher due to a tall rock or mountain, how do forms placed behind them become visible? Then is the ground behind tall objects high, hence making visible forms placed behind them? Or is there an ambiguity in representing the vertical form and the horizontal ground? And does it denote a lack of comprehension by the Mughal artist? Though such ambiguity in representation triggers a string of questions and doubts in the mind of the viewer, the purpose in following this principle soon becomes apparent.

The Mughal miniaturist placed forms on a continuously rising ground line, tilting through ninety degrees. In so doing, he was able to provide maximum visibility of forms. He treated the horizontal ground like a vertical wall,

providing more ground area for forms to exist. This principle was also used in showing interior scenes. The horizontal element in both outdoor and interior scenes are often seen from a bird's-eye view.

In interior settings, space cells are formed by walls, canopies, different ground levels or by carpets. Again, horizontal elements are seen from bird's-eye view while vertical figures are seen from direct view. This ensures maximum visibility of both horizontal and vertical forms. As the ground is viewed from bird's-eye view, it does not undergo any distortion due to fore-shortening; as would be the case if it was seen from direct view. This is because, that part of the ground or floor that appears close to the viewer should rightly be broad. Correspondingly, that part which moves away should rightly taper and receede diagonal to the picture plane. Such tapering and recession would reduce the space to place forms. However,

Fig. 23 Babur's coronation and accession to the throne of Ferghana.

by using a bird's-eye view, the artist presents a complete view of the horizontal element and provides more space to place forms.

In the painting, 'Babur's coronation and accession to the throne of Ferghanna', space cells are formed by the canopy and carpet. (Fig. 23) To the right middle ground is represented the canopy which is raised on a partly visible hexagonal platform. The difference in ground level and the canopy above this area establish it as the most notable region in the painting. This space is occupied by the Emperor and other significant figures. The second space cell is formed to the left edge of the picture plane by a richly carpeted area. It is occupied by two men, who face the main space cell. Musicians, attenders and the audience are seen in the foreground seated or standing on the patternised floor. Subsidiary space cells are seen to the top of the scene, formed by two parapets each housing a peacock. Pillars and curtains

Fig. 24 Hamzas spies attack the city of Kaymar.

further distinguish regions along the vertical axis of the painting, as seen in the main space cell. Floor decoration and carpet design are depicted as seen from aerial view, This invests the ground with a tilting effect.

In the painting, 'Hamza's spies attack the city of Kaymar', a complete view of the scene outside the city wall and a detail of the scene within the city is presented.(Fig. 24) The foreground area depicting exterior space shows a spy climbing a rope, in order to cross the city wall. Rocks, various types of trees and animals form part of this first space cell. The open tower rising from the city wall houses a spy beheading his opponent, and other dead men. This is the next space cell. Space behind the wall with sleeping men, totally unaware of the dreadful incident forms the consecutive space cell. By combining both direct and bird's-eye view, an unusual space

experience is presented. At the same time, space both outside and within the city wall are shown. Space on either side ofastructural barrier are used as space cells.

Different areas in the painting, 'Hamza's spies attack the city of Kaymar', evoke different emotional responses. The first space cell with an open landscape setting shows a quiet and peaceful scene. The spy who finds his way to the tower offers a link between the first and second space cells. He brings with him a note of impending conflict into the succeeding scene. The massacre, brutality and death reveal the heightened violence in the second space cell. Within the city, men are seen sleeping blissfully unaware of the violent event in the subsequent unit. This area is as calm and peaceful as the first space cell.

Forms placed within different space cells

Fig. 25   Receiving the news of the birth of Salim.

imply distance between them. Varying ground levels are indicated by outer space showing ground level, inner space showing floor level, while the tower reveals space above ground level. The combined view points helped the Mughal artist to present simultaneity of vision, to show interior and exterior space, both of which were required to present the theme of the painting effectively.

In the painting entitled, 'Receiving the news of the birth of Salim', three prominant compartments in succession are formed.(Fig. 25) This painting shows inner space of a palace building, with a view of three rooms. The first compartment in the foreground reveals the surging excited crowd, benefiting from the king's generosity. They receive alms from the palace attendants. These figures are set off against the brown palace wall. In the next section, musicians are shown seriously involved

in making melody, on receiving the news of the birth of the prince. Part of the floor is visible in the upper right side of this section. A doorway in the right leads to the next compartment where the significant event is portrayed. The queen and prince with a company of attendants occupy this region. This compartment is replete with bed, curtains, carpet, some furniture and an open pavillion. Each space cell is indicative of a room, where different actions take place. Various activities are seggregated by space cells and are placed according to their order of importance. Starting from foreground and leading inward to the chief event. By combining views a glimpse of the event within each compartment is made visible. The painting presents simultaneity of vision. Some forms are shown in direct view such as men and walls, while the ground is seen in bird's-eye view. Besides, presenting simultaneity of vision, the painting portrays simultaneity of action as well. Different actions are shown in each space

Fig. 26 Rejoicing at the birth of Akbar's second son at Fathepur Sikri.

cell; actions that take place in different rooms, at the same time.

When more events had to be shown in the same painting, the picture plane is further divided by more architectural members. Palace walls run in different directions sectioning the painting into several units, restricting particular action in relevant areas. This may be seen in the painting, 'Rejoicing at the Birth of Akbar's second son at Fatehpur Sikri'.(Fig. 26) Here, the picture plane is divided into four compartments, with the innermost section portraying a princess with her baby, being attended by maids. The neighbouring parts show performing female dancers and a few attenders. One part of this area is sectioned off to depict astrologers preparing the horoscope. Preparing the horoscope was an important event that took place when a child

Eig. 27 Daughters of Sultan Muhammad being married to Amirzada Muhammad Sultan, Mir Muhammad and Shah Rukh.

was born in the royal palace. It was often included in birth scenes. This area forms a minor space cell within the second space cell. Musicians are seen giving their performance outside the palace walls, and a man is seen rushing with a cradle on his head. The entire picture plane is fragmented into a number of organised units, to order each differing activity within it.

Another outstanding painting which follows similar space division is the painting, 'Daughters of Sultan Muhammed being married to Amirzada Muhammad Sultan, Mir Muhammad and Shah Rukh'.(Fig. 27) Here the painting has a number of diagonally running walls dividing the area into four major space cells. The outer most part shows several musicians and attendants. In the second section, female musicians and dancers perform gracefully and joyously. While the innermost compartment is further

divided into two regions. To the left are represented the Emperor and the nobles and to the right the princesses attended by maids. The picture space is divided into rooms to section off events.

In such paintings the building is presented without the ceiling. Only in the innermost compartment, the ceiling is seen. So, it is possible for the artist to show the events in progress in various rooms. Thus Mughal miniaturists show in one painting what would otherwise be depicted in more than one painting.

Mughal miniaturists hence supersede a naturalistic painter who sets himself on tight reigns making illustrations based on reason and reality; who deletes that which is beyond his view, and makes no daring attempts to peer over the wall, to picturise a glimpse of what he sees within; who gives no room in his

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painting to depict the event that takes place in adjacent rooms.

If he were to present different happenings eccuring simultaneously in various rooms, he would paint on many canvases. He would produce a series of paintings on the Birth of Princes and the marriage of Princesses. Mughal miniaturists have been able to see and represent more than their European counterparts, in one painting. They make snapshot pictures of various activities, in various rooms at the same time and in the same painting. To present the whole sequence within the limited space, they combine views and divide the picture plane.

The aspect of time has been overcome by a careful use of the picture space where space is fragmented to show different rooms, elaborating the avenue presented for view. This is

an outcome of the Mughal artist's act of imagination, fostered by his creative instinct and nourished by a creative understanding of space.

CHAPTER - III

HIERARCHICHAL PERSPECTIVE

Hierarchical perspective is a graded system of drawing people or things on a plane surface to give impression of the relative importance of objects. This is often contradictory to our natural space experience.

Over the years artists have used various devices, to lay emphasis on the protagonist figure, arriving at a particular area of visual significance. One of the simplest methods would be resorting to a central placement of the chief figure on the picture plane. Here, immediate and easy recognisibility of the primary figure results.

At times instant recognition is avoided for specific effects. The main figure is placed off-centre or to one side and subordinate figures are carefully placed so as to gradually lead the eye to the focal point. Thereby the point of climax is confronted slowly rather than instantly and directly.

Certain artists accent the main figure by using dramatic light effects. Similar effect can be obtained with a skillful manipulation of colour scheme, where the principal figure is painted with striking colours, drawing immediate attention. Besides, by a subordination of minor elements, dominance can be placed on important forms. Further manipulation and careful calculation can usher order of importance among all the figures in the composition . The degree of emphasis on each figure can be made to vary according to the requirements of the

painting. Such devices help the eye to identify the dominance or subordination and trace the extent of importance in figures.

Dominance or subordination can be created through size manipulation in forms. Consequently size of forms do not conform to our coginzance of them as related to their placement in near or distant space conforming to rules of perspective. They are manipulated so as to obtain more or limited emphasis. The size of forms are determined by the degree of importance attached to them rather than by their size variation determined by their placement in near or distant space.

In Mughal paintings we find the use of hierarchical perspective where figures are placed according to the order of importance. Being receptive to innovation the mughal school incoporated notable features from other

styles. It adopted the use of hierarchical perspective from frescoes. In their compositions Ajanta painters placed much importance on the figure of Buddha. His spirituality and divinity are expressed in double life size impressions of the Buddha image. When represented among monks or common man, the Buddha image is much taller, at times double life size.

When Mughal artists employed hierarchical perspective, important figures were established as isolated forms, or surrounded by open space. Often the size of the chief character was increased, irrespective of its position in space. At times the emperor was placed in the centre, with subordinate figures encircling him. The space allocated for the main figure, and the space provided for subordinate figures is of prime concern to us.

In the painting, 'Babur captures a flock of sheep from the Hazaras' , the Emperor is

placed slightly off-centre shown mounted on a horse . (Fig. 22) . He is set against a clear ground and his whole form is made conspicuous. Subordinate figures are only partially revealed in contrast to the principal figure. Prominant central portrayal and the encompassing open space ensure the Emperor's protagonist role in the scene.

In the painting entitled, ' The ceremony of the Review of Troops ', referred to under superimposition of forms, specific and hierarchical ordering too is witnessed (Fig.5.). The chief character, the figure of the Emperor stands apart from the rest of the gathering. The soldiers present at the occasion are cluttered together forming a vertical section to the right edge of the painting. The cow, the Emperor followed by an official and the nine standards have a horizontal orientation. These are notable elements in the painting. Space recession

along horizontal sections is controlled and gradual. Swift recession is witnessed along the vertically aligned soldiers. Besides, the protagonist figure, is placed along the central axis in the painting forcibly drawing attention towards himself. The important elements are well spaced on the picture plane, with sufficient space between and around them. They hence sustain interest.

'Rendering of Justice', where space is composed of many receptacles is yet another painting, which lays emphasis on the figure of the emperor. (Fig.21.) Here the Emperor and the old woman are centrally placed with some amount of open space around them. The accompanying figures are grouped together to the extreme sides, eagerly watching the incident. By way of placing the main figure in the centre and providing open space around them, immediate cognition results.

At times the figure of the Emperor is almost double the size of other figures. In the painting, 'Khusrau Shah Paying homage to Babur', Babur is shown seated under a tree (Fig. 17). He is almost as tall as the figure of the standing attendant. Here less important figures are placed outside the main space cell formed by the stream. The encircling stream limits the main action within the central region. Open space between the two acting figures expresses emphasis on them.

'Mughal Prince in the hunting field', referred to under receptacle space, has small zig-zagging units (Fig. 13). Within these space cells men are arranged along a vertical axis to the right edge of the painting. The first group of figures at the base are closely spaced. A similar clustered group at the top is seen behind an earth mound. In contrast to the closely spaced groups,

the centrally placed Emperor and attendant are well spaced. Sufficient open space between and around them, highlights their prominance in the scene. Besides, focus on the principal figures is obtained by placing them against a receeding background. Successive receptacles formed behind the Emperor creates depth in the scene. So the dominant figure of the Emperor placed in the foreground region seems to project forward. Further, the striking black attire, the slightly enlarged proportion of the Emperor and the gesticulating hand also stress the chief figure.

Hierarchical perspective was used not only to lay emphasis on the Emperor proclaiming his political power, his intellectual ability and physical strength but was also employed in religious subjects. This may be seen in the painting, 'Birth of Jesus', where the centrally placed figures of Mary

Fig. 28 Birth of Jesus.

and Jesus are the dominant members (Fig.28). The presence of the divine beings is instantly felt in the painting. Several devoted men and joyous angels have gathered stressing the importance of the central figures. The more than life size figure of Mary is placed at an angle to the picture plane providing a good view of the baby. Open space in front of Mary helps establish her as the principal figure in the crowded composition. All supporting figures turn in her direction, further leading the eye to the significant area. An organised placement of angels flanking Mary on either side, seated, kneeling and hovering in the air, help create a niche like space to house her. The dominant central area and the niche like formation made by angels ensures strong accent on the protagonist figures. Space allocation and the dexterous use of space project Mary as the Central figure and invest her with significance and honour.

Fig. 29 Jahangir celebrating the festival of Ab-pashi

In durbar scenes the Emperor occupies a prominant place. The court members stand or sit around him in less important places. Often they may be cut-off by the picture frame. In the painting 'Jahangir celebrating the festival of Ab-pashi', the enthroned figure of the Emperor is placed to the upper right middle region (Fig.29.). He is seen leaning against a heavy bolster, seated comfortably on an elaborately curved throne. The space immediately infront of him and the throne is filled with delicate floral motifs depicting a rich carpet. On this are placed a small cushioned stool and a few accessories. This space is not filled by men, nor is it spartan plain but has a few essential objects. This open space is an important part of the painting which instantly moves the eye inwards to confront the enthroned Emperor. He is flanked on either side by members of the court who vary in size.

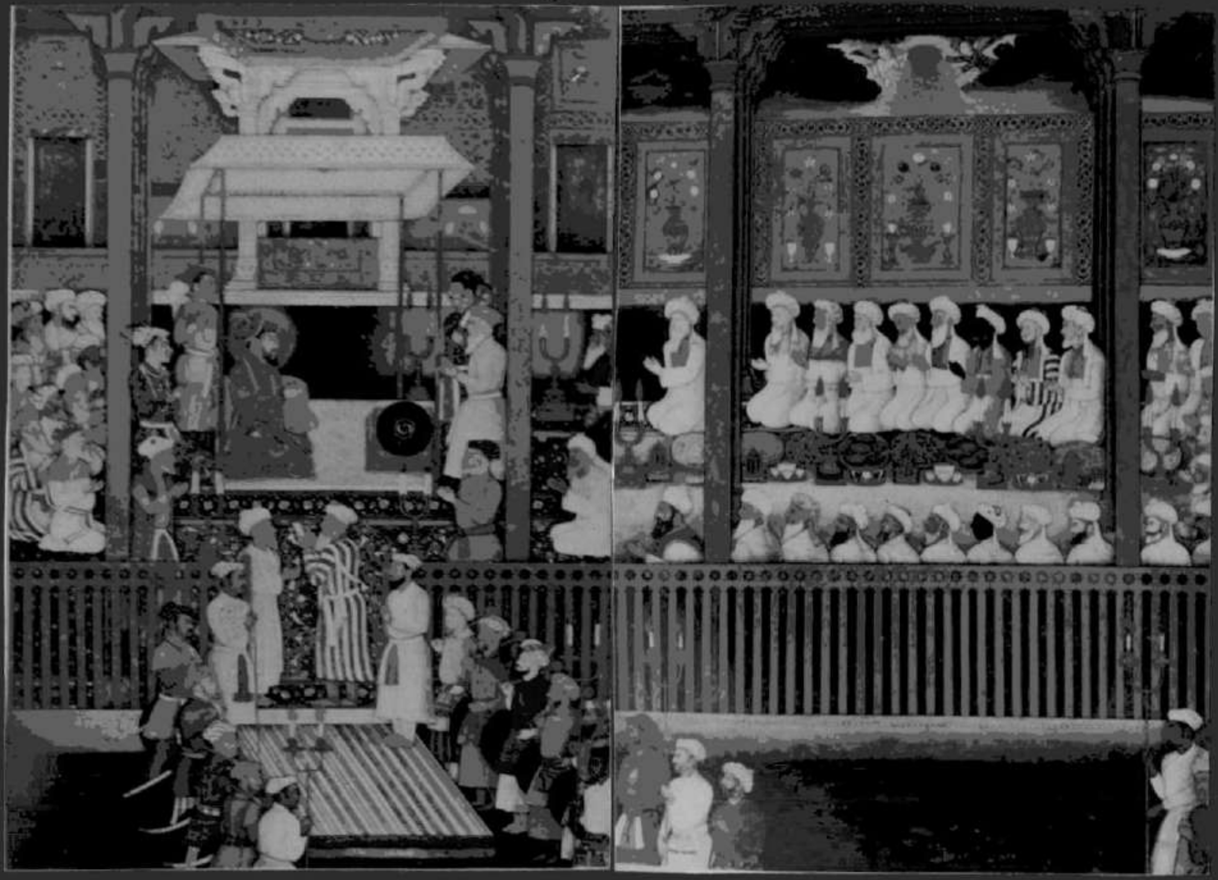


Fig..30 Shahjahan honours the religious orthodoxy.

According to their order of importance they take their positions either close to the Emperor or further away. Their size is also determined by the degree of importance attached to each person. Standing figures represented close to the Emperor are about the same height of the seated Emperor. Figures placed further away from the principal figure, in the foreground are much smaller. Two men placed in the central area directly below the open space and the female forms are dwarf like. Here this picture reveals the successful use of hierarchical perspective.

A more organised formal arrangement is seen in the painting entitled, 'Shahjahan honours the Religious Orthodoxy' (Fig.30). This painting which is represented in two sections shows the Emperor in the first section, seated on a centrally placed throne. Behind him are a group of men seated in

an unorganised manner. Attenders and noblemen are seen standing behind and infront of the Emperor. The painting continues the order of figures into the next section where men are seated on either side of a meal table. These figures are closely spaced overlapping each other.

In the first section, a pathway beginning from the foreground region is flanked on either side by attenders and guards, directly leading to the Emperor. The eye is then lead along a horizontal axis formed by the gathered men into the second section. Little importance is placed on the three men standing to the right foreground. Placement of figures is governed by the order of importance. A combination of open space and well organised forms in the remaining space, marks this painting as a notable example of its kind.

Fig. 31 Marriage precession of Dara Shikoh.

Besides placing figures according to the order of importance, Mughal paintings also used the principle of isolation to emphasise the principal character. Unusual formations and specific arrangement of subordinate forms helped the chief character to stand apart from the rest of the crowd in the composition.

This may be seen in the painting, 'Marriage procession of Dara Shikoh', (Fig.31). Here overlapping figures are placed along a vertical axis to the left edge of the scene. To the right edge are groups of figures, witnessing the arrival of Dara Shikoh. A display of fire works completes the vertical axis along this area. The two flanking vertical areas filled with cluttered forms permit a central area of relatively empty space. This is filled by a few men and two mounted horses. The large horse astriding forward is mounted by Dara Shikoh.

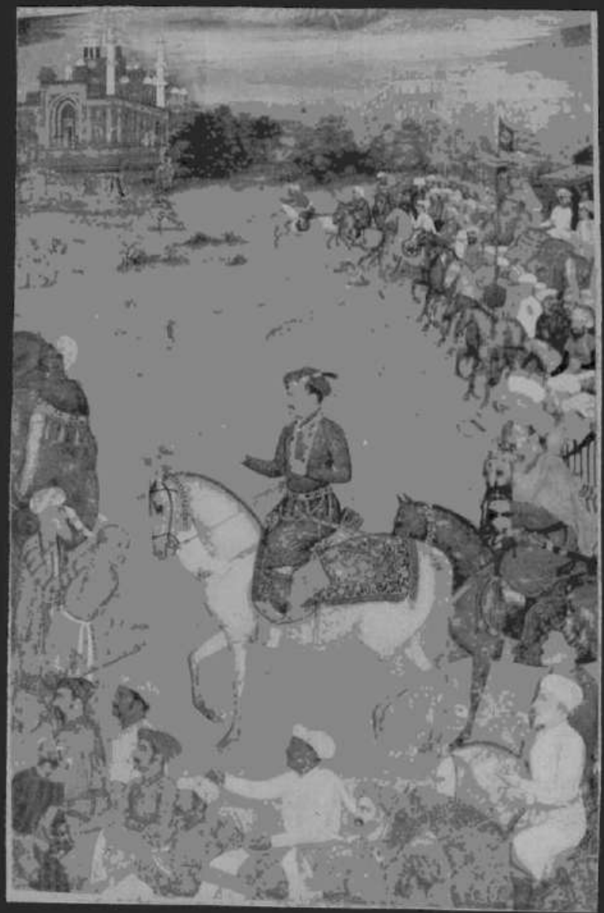


Fig. 32 Jahangir and his retinue.

His figure is central to the theme. In the painting also he approaches the central region. Such a portrayal is striking and ensures instant identification of the principal figure.

Yet another painting which shows an unusual formation is, 'Jahangir and his retinue', (Fig.32). This painting has a peculiar formation with the Emperor occupying the central foreground region. He is isolated and silhouetted against the light ocher ground. Men and horses form the shape of a 'U' roughly with one arm of the 'U' behind the Emperor, extending deep into the scene. Ample open space is alloted behind the emperor which receeds into the background. Against this the Emperor is thrown in relief drawing the viewer's instant attention. Limited space is set aside to depict accompanying men. However, this space has

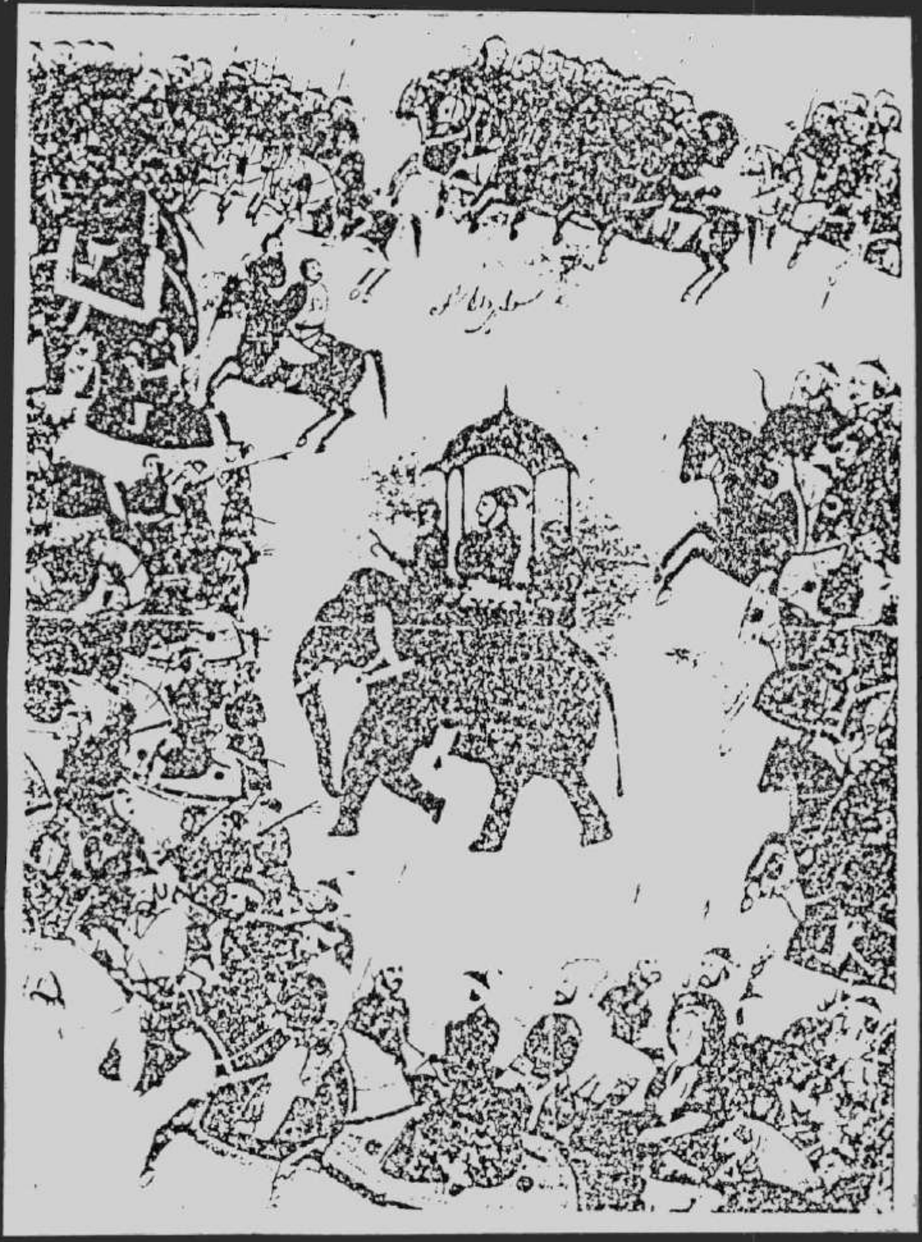


Fig. 33 Dara Shikoh Shajahan's eldest son with his armies.

been employed dexterously to portray the company without over crowding the composition. Nor do they overpower the figure of the Emperor. The stark isolation of the main figure is rather dramatic and effective. Such space allocation reflects the importance of the Emperor amidst other men.

In the painting, 'Dara Shikoh, Shahjahan's eldest son with his armies', a peculiar wreath formation is created. (Fig.33). The main figure, that of Dara Shikoh occupies the central area within the wreath. He is seen riding an elephant with two other men. Space around the elephant is left empty. An army of soldiers mounted on horseback form the wreath shape towards the edge of the picture frame. Groups in the background seem to be tightly packed, while figures in the foreground display some amount of space between them. Due to the contrasting effects

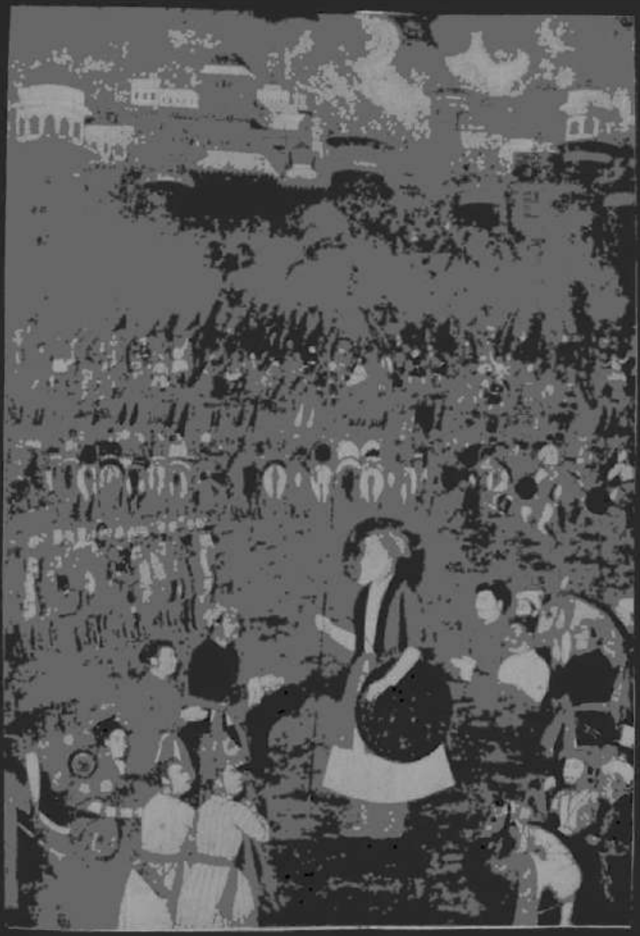


Fig. 34   Siege of Golconda with Awrangzeb shown as a conqueror in his advanced age.

of space around the Emperor and limited space among soldiers, emphasis on the main figure is instant and definate.

A rectilinear formation may be seen in the painting, 'Siege of Golkonda with Awrangzeb shown as a conqueror in his advanced age', (Fig. 34). Groups of overlapping figures form vertical sections on either side of Awrangzeb. A horizontal section is formed by soliders mounted on horseback behind the Emperor. The central figure is placed within the organised open space formed in the painting and draws maximum attention. This enlarged figure standing uprightly holds a spear and shield. These accentuate his significance further. Accompanying figures are smaller in scale, while those in the background are very small even to be clearly discerned. Cluttered groups and numerous overlapping figures

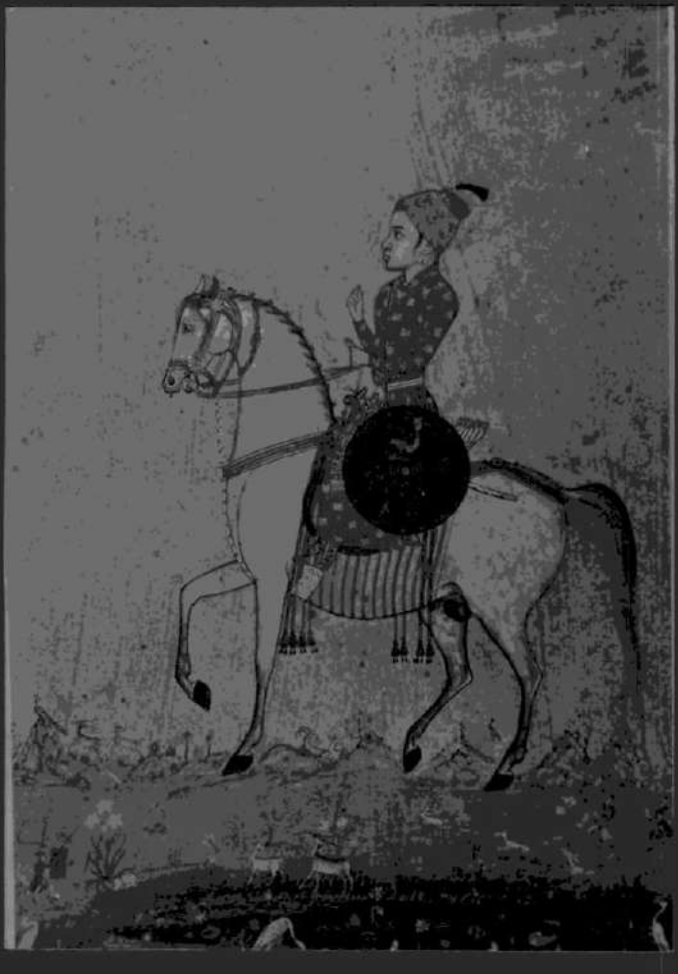


Fig. 35   Maharashtran Horseman

highlight the intensity of the war and proclaim the immensity of the conquest. Above all by centralising and enlarging Awrangzeb's figure and constrasting him against open space he is projected as the conqueror of the siege.

A further exaggeration of the hierarchical perspective may be seen in the painting, 'Maharastran horseman' (Fig.35). The dominating figure of the young man is shown mounted on a horse which marches forward. Both man and horse are sharply contrasted against the pale green sky. At ground level three men and several animals are depicted on an unusally liliputian size. Deer, rabbit, cranes, peacock and plants are all represented in a diminative size. The extent of exaggeration

in the size of the main figure is of marked significance. Hierarchical perspective used to the utmost level is witnessed in this painting.

Hierarchical Perspective in Mughal paintings determines the significance of figures according to the thematic content of the painting. It determiness the dimensions and scale of figures as per the order of importance and correspondingly the amount of space alloted for each figure. Focal points are created by contrasting important figures against open space. Some times they are placed centrally or slightly off-centre in the scene. The Mughal artist often renders a blow-up like version of the significant figure to ensure maximum emphasis when placed among his subordinates. While laying maximum importance on the figure central to the theme, other figures become comparatively less important. Figures that are less

significant are closely spaced, overlapping each other and often only partially visible. The space occupied by them is limited and less significant. Often they define the periphery of the painting. Unusual formations made by subordinate figures serve as the setting for the central and subordinate figures is strikingly different. It is calculated and effective conveying the importance of figures as per the requirement and thematic content of the painting. Though the unusual formations and dramatic enlargements portray space that is not similar to our everyday experience, the theme is well expressed and unmistakeably made known to the viewers. This does not surprise one as the East has been striving after the 'ideal' rathern than losing itself in the 'incidental'.

CHAPTER-IV

NEAR AND DISTANT SPACE

Our perception of space is associated with our experience of space in nature, which draws a close link between our knowledge and vision of space. And we often turn to our understanding and experience of space when viewing art forms depicting space. This is perhaps more pertinent to comprehend near and distant space. A thorough knowledge and experience of space can guide our perception of near and distant space in painting.

Certain elements of art have inherent properties of distant space experience. They match our personal experience of space in

nature. Forms that appear close to our vision seem to be in their actual size, but, as they recede in distance, forms seem to diminish in size. This factor of change in size of forms has a strong impact in evoking recessional space experience. An artist should have a thorough knowledge of forms in relation to the space in which they appear to portray them in varying distances in space.

Forms placed to a distance from us not only seem to diminish in size but also lose their clarity. They appear to blurr their sharpness and clarity reduces. Further, forms lose their intensity of colour. Colour values become lighter with additional distance. With great distance, forms appear in neutralised colours with greyed values and hazy lines. Textural quality becomes less prominant and

details appear indistinct. Forms that appear close by are seen with distinctness. They appear with sharp defining lines with intense colours and precise details and textures. Such change in experience of forms at different distances is easily understood, as it is witnessed in reality. This principle was understood by European artists after many years of study and experimentation. When Mughal artists sought to employ these principles, they used contradicting combinations challenging the experience of complete space recession.

Representation of three-dimensional forms, i.e., forms having more that one plane, volume, mass and solidity, naturally imply that they occupy three-dimensional space. Parallel lines of forms placed at an angle to the picture

plane tend to converge. Hence, forms having converging parallels also denote space recession.

The Western device of using single point perspective to depict forms in space is a scientific method of creating distant space experience. Here through a geometric system, sizes of forms gradually undergo a variation depending on the distance at which they are placed in reality. This contrivance is a definite method of showing three-dimensional space. Besides, they depict forms from different view points in the same painting and often combined reverse perspective in certain forms.

Reverse perspective is another device used in paintings. But unlike in the Western

Fig. 36 A Mongol Chieftain and attender under a tree.

single point perspective, here forms converge as they approach the spectator. This device was commonly used by Chinese artists. Its influence on Mughal miniatures has left an indisputable mark on Mughal paintings.

Mughal paintings show a use of intuitive space experience in many paintings. Some of their early works are greatly influenced by the Chinese tradition showing the use of reverse perspective. Later, examples reveal influence from the European tradition. These are based on our natural perception of distant space, and also on the use of converging perspective.

The painting entitled, 'A Mongol Chieftain and attendants under a tree', employs the principle of diminishing size to suggest distant space.(Fig. 36) The foreground space is occupied by a group of six men seated under the shade of a tree. The Chieftain is centrally placed

on a luxuriously carpeted platform. Attenders, musicians and a dog occupy the surrounding space. The platform is shown in reverse perspective with a slight increase in its height as it moves away from the viewer. The diverging lines of the platform contradict space recession. However, figures that overlap the platform reduce the contradictory experience of space. The brightly attired figures are flat and two-dimensional in nature, with minimal shading in certain areas. This is witnessed in the elbow, waist and foot area of the right foreground figure in an orange jami; the blue shawl worn by the left foreground figure; and the armpits of the mandolin player wearing a pale green jami. Besides this limited shading in a few areas, the figures are two-dimensional.

Clearly defined figures painted in bright intense colours and the details seen in the carpet design and the carðful delineation of

features render themselves as closely positioned forms. The tree with its dark well defined foliage and equally well defined trunk and branches also indicates foreground position. Overlapping rock and earth mounds form the middle ground area. Subtle shading along the outlines adds a touch of three-dimensionality to the ground. Light values of pink and yellow green have a receding quality as against the intense colours of foreground forms. Along the horizon, the value of green is further reduced contributing to a recessional effect. However, the red outline of the rock along the right background has an advancing effect. This is due to the sharpness and sudden increase in the colour intensity. The diminishing trees placed in this region have an effect of distant forms, due to their reduced size and light colour. To the left background, buildings and trees are

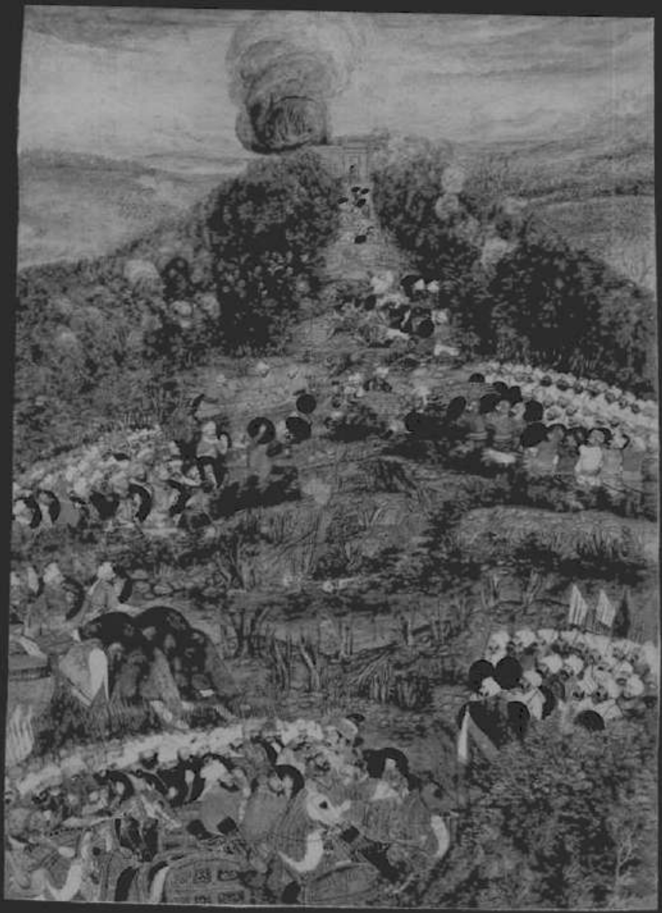


Fig.. 37 An incident at the Siege of Qandahar.

greatly reduced in size, instantly providing a sense of space recession. The light green foliage and off-white structure further intensify the feeling of distance. A well graded blue sky suggests effects of a distant horizon.

'A Mongol Chieftain and attendants under a Tree', shows attempts at rendering foregroung and distant space. In its manipulation of placing well defined, sharp and intensely coloured forms in the foreground with diminishing, light coloured forms in the background, the painting clearly portrays near and distant space.

In the painting, 'An incident at the siege of Qandahar', an expansive landscape scene with a high horizon line is seen(Fig. 37).

Groups of closely placed soldiers are interspersed with areas of ground and greenery. These alternating areas rise in stages on both sides of the painting, with a final area of dense foliage flanking the city of Qandahar. The well balanced space is defined by intensity coloured forms upto the centrally placed city. Bright red and orange clothes contrasted with white turbans and black shields retain their intensity from foreground till the city walls. Treatment of figures with sharp lines and minute details is evident till middleground region. Intensity of foliage colour is also equally uniform from the base of the picture plane upto the areas flanking the city. Such uniformity in colour intensity and rendering of details is much against the principle of distant space. However, the size variation denotes effects of near and distant forms. Figures in

the middleground are smaller in size than foreground figures, and those seen near the city entrance are less than half the size of the foreground forms. Such reduction in the size of figures enables one to experience a feeling of distant space. The light colour of the city wall also implies distant space. Beyond the intense areas of foliage flanking either side of the city walls are seen triangular sections. The size of the plants in this area is small and the colour intensity is reduced. Foliage and mountain peaks are indistinct and blurred having a bluish tinge. The sky also reduces in intensity as it reaches the horizon. The carefully rendered flames that rise from the city lose their sharp definition as they rise into the sky. Though the intervening space is not well handled and the transition from fore ground area to the background triangular sections of land is sudden space recession

Fig. 38 A Prince at a village well.

and the feeling of distant space is definitely established.

The painting, 'A Prince at a village well', is a meticulously rendered landscape.(Fig. 38) The unfolding panoramic landscape shows the prince with this company of men in the foreground. Treatment of figures is two-dimensional, eschewing shading which would suggest the volume of forms. Every detail is clearly depicted and the mane of horses is evenly grouped forming a precise pattern. The undulating ground and flowing water show suggestions of colour modulation. The trees closing the foreground region form a stage like space for the main event. Plants and trees in this region are rendered with a keen interest for minute details. Behind the foreground space the expansive landscape is punctuated by a processional group,

trees and a few architectural structures. A row of enfringing light blue mountains occupy the distant region. Distant space is defined by diminishing forms. However, the colour scheme is fairly uniform from foreground to background, arresting a sudden recession into the picture plane. The intense colours are striking and have the capacity to retain attention for more time. The dark blue sky is relieved by stylised clouds. The entire painting is carefully and painstakingly worked with emphasis on details. It is only in the manipulation of size that the effect of distant space is achieved. Even this is rather abrupt and sudden, as small forms in the background are in striking contrast to the comparatively large foreground forms.

'Visit to a holyman', is a painting

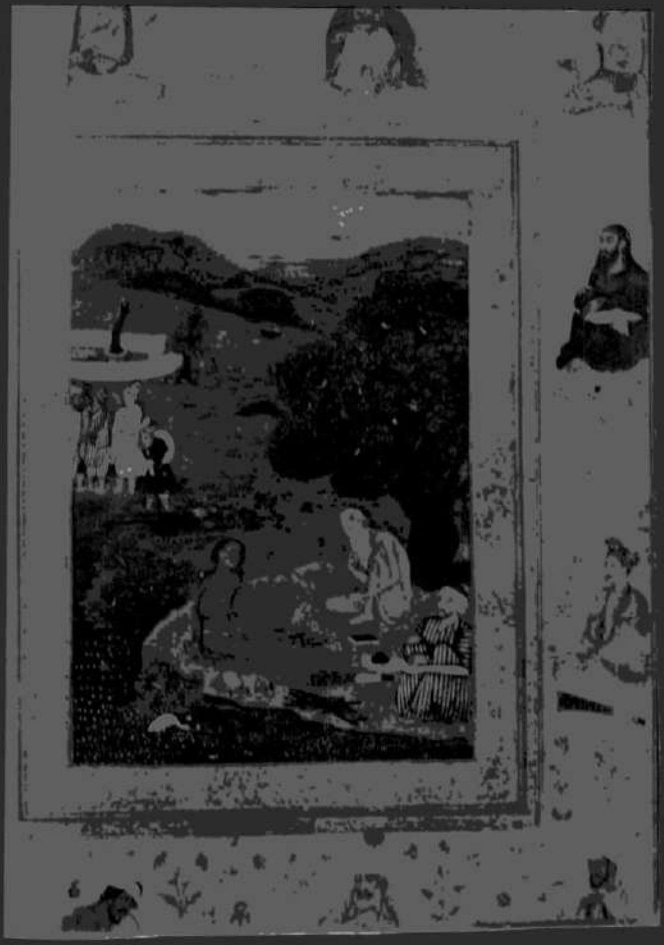


Fig. 39 Visit to a Holyman.

which shows a landscape with hills providing the setting for the event.(Fig. 39) The holyman alongwith two other devotees is seen in the foreground. While in the middle-ground are a group of approaching men. The distant area is occupied by tall mountains. Modelling of the foreground tree and land indicate mass and solidity ensuring their existence in three-dimensional space. The size of figures from foreground to middle-ground undergoes a slight variation suggesting distance. The intensity of colours which is uniform throughout the painting, and the tall darkly coloured mountains do not complement the experience of distant space.

The transition from foreground to background in size of forms was rendered with a better understanding in some paintings. The painting,

Fig. 41 A European.

represented as small specs of less intense green. This is indicative of atmosphere effects on colour with additional distance in space. Mountains along the horizon are bluish implying distant forms. The gradual yet striking variance in size of forms presents an effect of expansive space.

The painting, 'A European', shows the prominant figure in the foreground silhouetted against a simple landscape setting.(Fig. 41) The rendering of the European shows certain amount of modelling. It denotes three-dimensional mass and volume emphasising the three-dimensional space the figure occupies. The landscape immediately behind the youngman is rather plain with only two small plants. In the distant background the landscape houses two huts, a group of trees and mountains to the

Fig. 42 Madonna and Child.

side and a temple with devotees, a partially visible minaret and trees to the right side. The structures to the right side reveal no modelling. The huts and trees to the left are well modelled. The diminished size of background forms and the hazy mountains suggest distant space. Contrast between near and distant forms is exaggerated in their scale.

Strong Western influence is seen in the painting, 'Madonna and Child',(Fig. 42) This painting which is a copy of a Western original, shows the monumental figure of Mary occupying a major portion of the scene. Careful modelling picks up every rise and fall of the blue mantle worn by Mary. An experience of different depths of space is presented by the varying tones of light and shade on the drapery.

Fig. 43 Allegorical portrait of the God Mars.

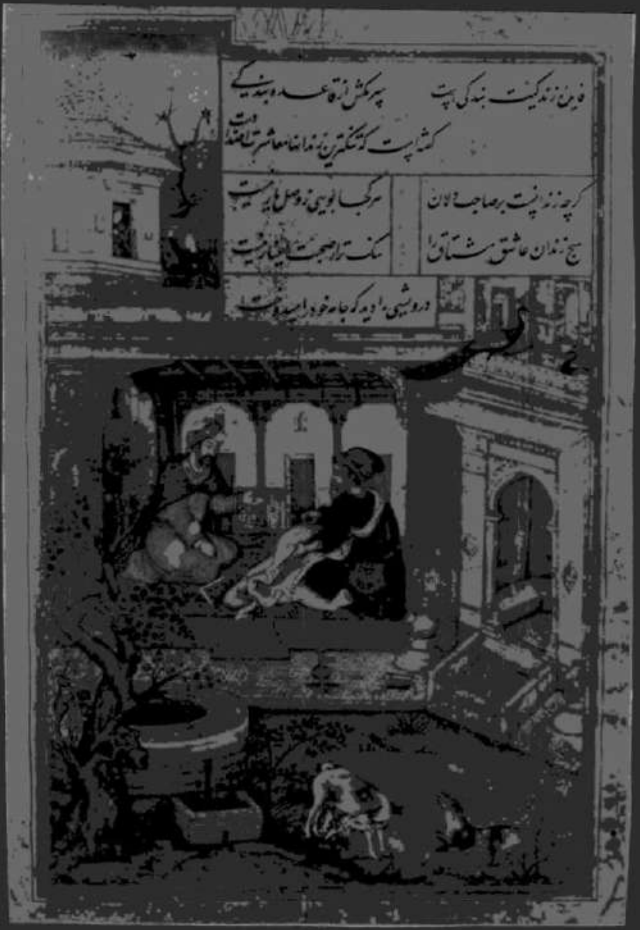


Fig. 44 The Foppish dervish rebuked.

The 'Allegorical portrait of the God Mars', is another painting which shows a clear indication of European influence.(Fig. 43) The figure is well modelled at the chest, below armpits and waist indicating solidity of human form, beneath the garment. The thick cloak which is also well deliniated, especially at the right shoulder and along the right side suggests the volume and thickness of the cloth. However, platform on which Mars stands is shown in reverse perspective challenging the effect of space recession into the painting.

The painting entitled, 'The Foppish dervish rebuked', shows a better rendering of three-dimensional forms and converging parallels.(Fig. 44) The main event takes place within the architectural setting where the dervish is

rebuked by a saint. Figures and forms in the foreground are well modelled so as to depict their solidity and mass. The main architectural unit is proficiently rendered with parallel beams running diagonal to the picture plane. Inner space is well depicted showing a fore shortened view of the ceiling and floor. Beams and ceiling in this room are carefully modelled. A slightly dark colour tonality is a revelation of interior space with restrained lighting. Beyond this room is seen a light pink wall pierced with three doorways and niches encouraging space recession, while preventing further penetration into the scene. Above the main room to the left is a partial view of an open terrane and room. This structure and the two figures in this area are small denoting distant space. To the right edge of the painting is another

room with an arched opening. Inner space in this building also shows careful modelling indicating three-dimensional volume and a play of light in certain areas near the entrance and on the sloping ledge on the wall. Above the room is an open terrace with two peacocks. A play of open and defined space within rooms gives an unusual experience of space in this painting.

This painting is an unusual creation of the Mughal era. It appears relatively closer to reality. It manifests like an extension of our space and air, One which we can relate to easily. It is a clear portrayal of intimate naturalistic space.

'Shah Jahan enthroned with Dara Shikoh

Fig. 45 Shahjahan enthroned with Dara Shikoh standing before him.

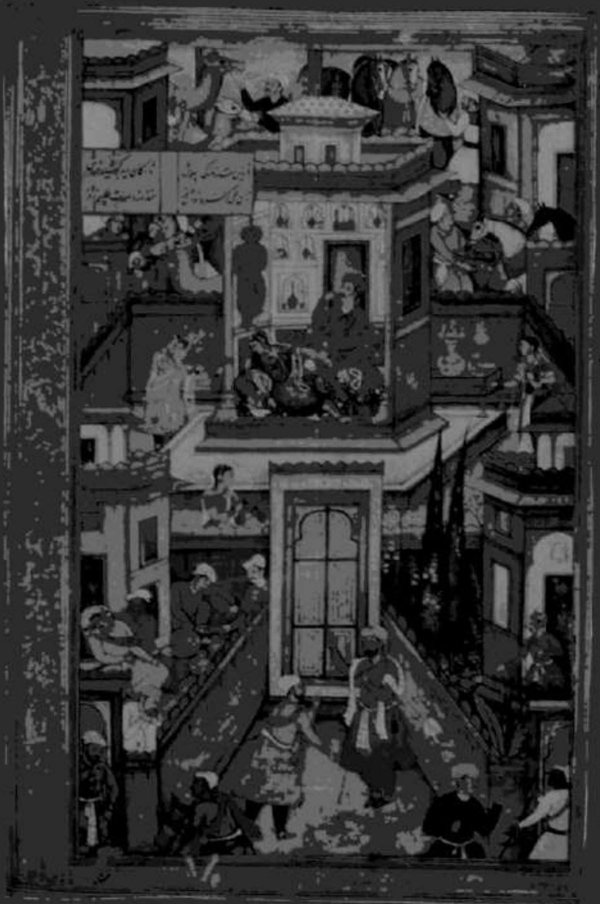


Fig. 46 The Bronze statue warns the King.

standing before him', is a painting which employs the Western principle of converging parallels to show space recession.(Fig. 45) The platform on which the two figures stand and the ceiling of the canopy are shown with converging parallels indicating receding space. However, the details on the carpet and ceiling are treated as seen from bird's-eye view with no trace of foreshortening, witnessed in the structures themselves. The painting thus shows space experience depicted by converging parallels which is abruptly arrested by the two-dimensional treatment of sky. Hence, an experience of shallow space is evidenced here.

'The Bronze statue warns the King' shows the use of converging parallels and reverse perspective in the same painting.(Fig.46)

Fig. 47 Akbar receiving Mirza Aziz Kota.

Converging parallels are seen in the central pathway in the foreground. Here the walls on either side taper as they recede into the painting. Converging parallels are also seen in the walls enclosing the spacious open courtyard beyond the central pathway; the place which houses the chief event. Reverse perspective is used in rendering the platform and the main room, within which are depicted the King, a woman and the bronze statue Use of perspective is not consistent in this painting. Lines push and pull creating surface pattern. A mosaic of spatial types emerges.

The painting, 'Akbar receiving Mirza Aziz Koka', is another painting which shows a combination of different perspectives.(Fig. 47) It is evident here, that, the concept of space

recession conveyed through architectural forms was either not properly understood, or that it was intentionally manipulated to obtain the resultant effects. The foreground space showing a carpeted floor is treated as a vertical plane. The middle ground undergoes distortion due to the use of reverse perspective. The canopy seen above Akbar is also rendered in reverse perspective; but it is viewed from the opposite direction. There is certain amount of discrepency in the use of perspective in this painting. Space recession is contradicted in the use of perspective. The background area rendered in a dark colour does not particularly suggest space recession. It however, sets off the figures in the foreground.

'Prince and Courtiers at Camp', shows effective use of light to model forms and

Fig. 48 Prince and courtiers at camp.

suggest space in the painting.(Fig. 48) The prince, courtiers and women are gathered around a small candle, the only light source in the night scene. Figures show certain amount of modelling that depicts three-dimensionality. The tent is well modelled depicting space between folds and the rise and fall of the material. Light illuminates the central region throwing deep shadows in many areas, such as behind the two men seated to the right of the Prince and his lover. Shadows within the tent and on the top of the tent are indicative of space that is away from the light source. This is one of the paintings that shows a bold attempt at rendering a night scene. in predominant dark tones, Usually night scenes in Mughal paintings are treated with normal light effects; a moon or stars windicating the night sky.

This painting is an unusual night scene. The limited lighting defines foreground forms, while the background space is shut off by dark tones. An intimate dark space is portrayed in the scene. Space experience is in striking contrast to most of the other Mughal paintings.

Attempt at portraying three-dimensional space experience has often been made by Mughal artists. Many devices used to render forms in space have been successful in converging effects of three-dimensional space and that of distant and near space. However, whether the Mughal artists chief aim was to convey three-dimensional space experience as witnessed in reality is a point of debate. This is because his works often show more than what one can see in reality.

CHAPTER-V

AESTHETIC SPACE

In art 'aesthetics' refers to the laws and principles determining the beautiful in art objects. Space resulting from the use of such principles is 'aesthetic space'. It does not present the 'real' but the 'beautiful' and the 'ideal'.

Persian poetry was characterised by its love for precise and meticulous description. Its idealised formulae created an epitome of perfect beauty, a world of fantasy and romance. It placed its stamp on Persian painting and had a continued impact on Mughal paintings. Consequently, forms in

Mughal paintings often manifest as idealised formulae of elegant beauty.

The criteria to judge the aesthitic qualities of an art object depends on the necessity of its creation, its inner motives and its impact on viewers. Aesthetic space would be gauged according to the necessity of the specific space created. The inner motives which dictate such space formulation and its impact on viewers are of equal significance.

In Mughal paintings, the periphery of determining factors are wide. They are based on vicissitudinary influences, certain thematic requirements and the artists expertise in organising compositions.

Certain components such as colour, scale

Luxurious carpet designs and architectural forms bear testimony to the Mughal love for detail. Designs are painted as a flat pattern on the picture plane. Often, distortion due to foreshortening or the use of converging parallels is avoided. In other words, distortion of forms that are in conformity with rules of Western perspective, does not witness a consequent distortion in details and designs.

Due to the climatic condition and desert land, a monochromatic colour scheme unfolded all along the Mughal Empire. This lasted for a great part of the year. So, people in the Mughal Empire ushered in good cheer by making extensive use of colours in interiors and their costumes. Comprehensive use of striking colours with a balanced union of delicate tones and a

discreet use of gold and silver form part of the Mughal tradition. This encouraged Mughal artists to adopt a bright and brilliant pallette in their paintings. This made an instant appeal on the viewer. Besides, the use of two-dâmensional brilliant pure colours was characteristic of the Persian Safavid school, which had ingrained its features into Mughal art.

Perspective as a tool in indicating naturalistic space experience is not the ultimate goal of Mughal artists. Though the influx of European influence in the use of Western perspective in evidenced in certain objects, it is not complete and total. All objects do not follow rules of Western perspective. Often view points vary to create aesthetic space.

Scale is another device that is instrumental in exhibiting forms in consequent space. Mughal miniatures show great respect for explicit compositions. Hence, scale was sacrificed at the alter of composition. Irrespective of their position in space and unmindful of interrelated proportions of neighbouring forms, scale remains unaltered.

Some of the most signifieant paintings in the Mughal Empire portray a concious balance of forms. Proficiency in placing forms on the picture plane proclaims the beauty of space in art. Space resultant of such skill is the outcome of the artist's compositional competence.

'The ape outsmarts thieves' is a well balanced composition which reveals unambiguous display of forms.(Fig. 49) Rocks and trees

Fig. 49 The ape outsmarts thieves

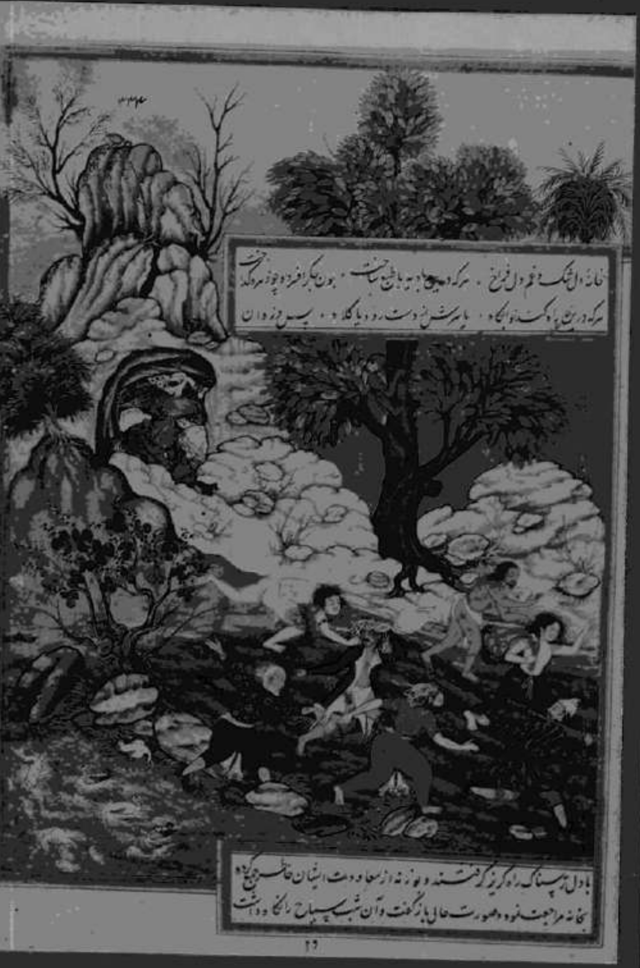


Fig. 50 Babur supervising the construction of a reservoir on the spring of Khwaja Sih Yaran, near Kabul.

in the background are as distinct as the foreground forms. Unmindful of their placement in near or distant space, their forms are precise, colours remain intense and details are conspicuous.

'Babur supervising the construction of a reservoir on the spring of Khwaja Sih Yaran, near Kabul', is a painting which shows ample forms.(Fig. 50) Men, architectural structures, mountains, flora and fauna crowd the composition. Trees in the background that are relatively small in size confirm their placement in distant space. However three peacocks that appear at the same distance are incongruous in scale. Peacock and trees are of similar size. Relative diminuition in size of forms is not present. The picture plane is packed with an essay of

forms utilising all empty space.

Consistently intense colours and well defined forms provide no indication of near or distant space.(Fig. 50) However, it firmly asserts the Mughal love for preciosity and brilliant colours. Space is used to depict forms according to the Mughal tradition and requirement rather than to portray forms in actual and relative space.

The painting, 'The troops of Sultan Akhmed Mirza perishe in the waters of the river Kuby', shows a dexterous use of the limited picture space(Fig 51)A 'close-up' view of the defeated troop and river is presented. The dimensions of the river is restrained to fit it within the painting. The horse seems big enough to cross the river in one galloping

movement. Yet, it shows two drowning horses and horsemen unable to free themselves from the implied immensity of the river. The river itself seems to be broken abruptly changing its course suddenly after it crosses the bridge. The continuity in the flow of the river stands threatened by the abrupt dislocation. The space allotted to represent the river is very limited in relation to other elements. This proves that the artist did not concern himself with representing objects in correct proportions. He was however, anxious to portray all essential forms to narrate the incident. As it was important for him to portray the river, fortress, bridge and the fleeing troops he has merely made a condensed representation of them.

It is only logical to relate to walls of

Fig. 51 The troops of Sultan Akhmed Mirza perish in the waters of river Kuby.

Fig. 52 Babur and his troops fight for the city of Andizhan.

a building as being taller than humanbeings. This is because man requires sufficient space in terms of height and breadth to afford unhindered movement within the building. Similarly, an entire building will rightly be larger than a humanbeing in terms of height, length and breadth. Such is the idea of space that man has in mind, man experiences, understands and witnesses in reality.

If the palace walls are not tall enough to hide people present behind, them, what is the principle of space allocation made in terms of interrelated sizes of forms? Or are men fighting a battle in the midst of toy houses or a model city? The painting, 'Babur and his troops fight for the city of Andizhan', is an example revealing such space. (Fig. 52) A view of the city interior and a view of the scene outside the city wall is

presented by combining direct and bird's-eye views. The relationship between forms in the foreground and the city wall are fairly convincing. However, the setting within the city walls is unnatural. Interrelated space experience is challenged.

Several small architectural structures with sloping tiled roof, parapets with merlon decoration, arched window openings, minarets and domes are notable. The structure and decoration conform to the architectural style of the day. Human forms that intersperse these buildings are very tall, and dwarf architectural members. Men and horses are relatively taller than the buildings. A group of four men seen dramatically gesticulating in the furthermost end of the painting are much taller than the neighbouring structures. Height

of buildings and that of men remain as isolated aspects of the painting. The amount of space allotted for the buildings is insufficient when compared to human forms. The artist had to disproportionately dwarf the structures, so as to fit them into the composition. Besides, his aim was to present a town scene to create an appropriate setting for the theme. By interspersing architecture with human forces, he has managed to evoke the feeling of a typical town scene. Though the extent of space allotted for interrelated scale is challenged, the interaction between forms is well established. Within his small format he has packed much information. To achieve this, the Mughal miniaturist was willing to sacrifice naturalism and principles of logic in terms of interrelated space.

The painting, 'The Bag-i Vaja Garden laid by

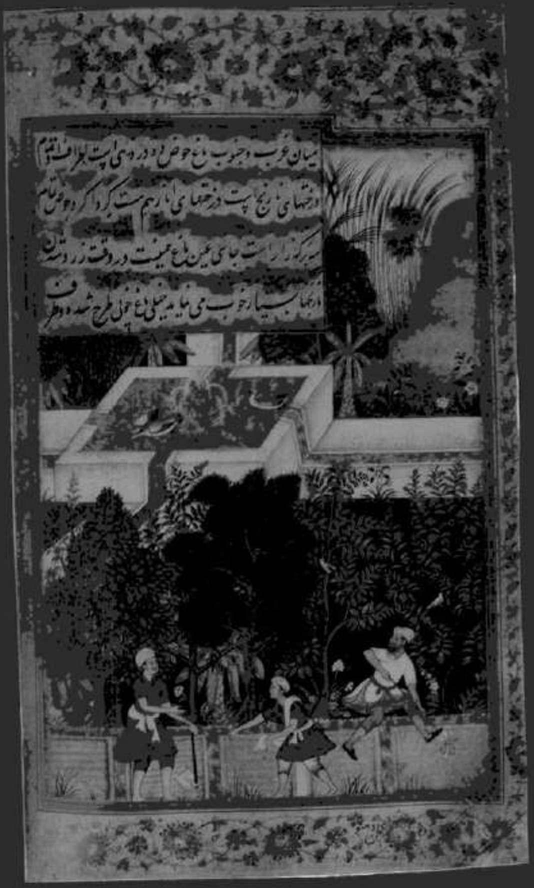


Fig. 53 The Bag-i Vaja Garden laid by Babur in Adinapur.

Babur in Adinapur', shows a combination of two views.(Fig. 53) Vertical elements such as the human figure, trees and ducks are shown from direct view while the horizontal elements such as the floor in the foreground, the garden and fountain are rendered in bird's-eye view. The picture space is ingeniously used to ensure better visibility of forms rather than to create a natural space experience.

The painting, entitled 'The garden of fidelity near Kabur', also employs a similar combination of views.(Fig. 54) Here a descriptive portrayal of the plan of the garden is evidenced. - seen from aerial view. Vertical elements such as the man, rocks, flora and fauna and the well are depicted in direct view. Forms do not conform to natural portrayal or single point perspective. What is seen is the most

Fig. 54 The garden of fidelity near Kabul

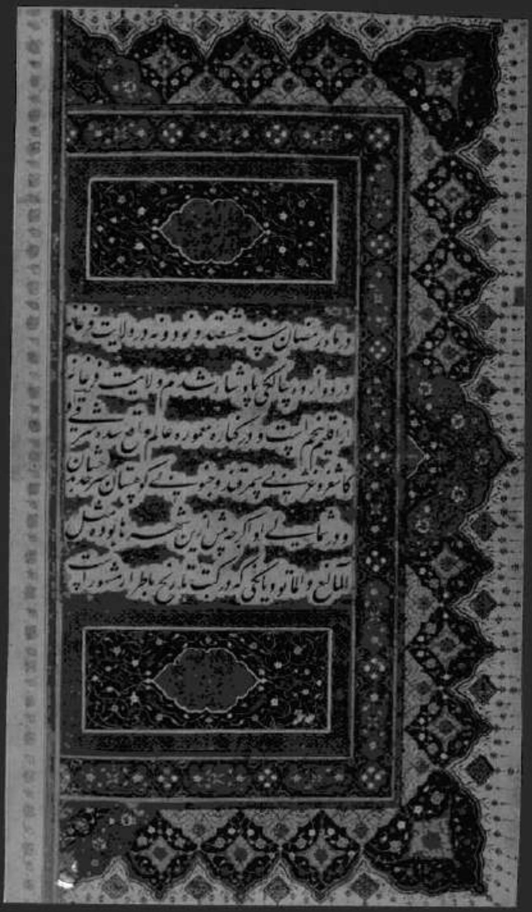


Fig. 55 Title sheet of Miniatúres Babur-namah.

representative delineation of elements, rather than a true portrayal. Forms are presented in detailed descriptions rather than through a holistic view. Besides, instead of what was seen, what was known has been recorded representation of forms takes place. Hence, the space occupied by forms conforms to conceptual representation, generating an aesthetic space experience.

The picture plane is judiciously divided into small units which are decorated with flower bearing plants and fruit trees. The square central unit that inserts itself into the four major units reveals two ducks. The paintings give appearance of being a vertically unrolled tapestry. A tapestry with patternised forms. It is similar in conception to, 'Title sheet of Miniatures Babur-namah'.(Fig. 55)

Fig. 56 Enthroned Shah Jahan with Dara Shikoh

Fig. 57 A Prince at the village well.

portrayal of forms. Patternised forms fill the geometric divisions in the garden scene. In the title sheet stylised floral designs intertwine spreading all over the sheet. This is only a decorative inscription sheet which has no artistic functional purpose. Yet, it is in close kinship with the painting, 'The garden of fidelity near Kabul'. This reveals that decoration and patterns play a lead role in Mughal miniatures.

The painting, 'Enthroned Shah Jahan with Dara Shikoh', standing before him reveals the Mughal love for perfect recording of design. (Fig. 56) This painting employs converging parallels to suggest three-dimensional space, (dealt with in the fourth chapter)

Consequently, architectural forms undergo distortion. A corresponding distortion im design is not effected. Architectural members are presented as seen in natural space. However, the exquisite floral motifs painted on the carpet and ceiling refute natural spaace space. experience. They are rendered in bird's-eye view throughout. This painting proves the prediliction for perfect rendition of design to natural treatment of forms in space.

The Mughal artists penchant for detail and sharp definition is evidenced in the painting, 'A Prince at the village well'.(Fig. 57) In this painting diminutive forms in the background imply distant space. However, the reduced scale of forms is not accompanied by blurred forms or reduced colour intensity.

The effect of representing distant space is not total. The propensity towards presenting sharply defined forms, overrules literal impression of distant space.

'Reading youth with falcon', portrays a decorative landscape with groups of three flowers painted in white, yellow, blue and red.(Fig. 58) These flowers retain their colour intensity even in the background. Gracefully arching slender plants create a niche like space to house the young man. The two-dimensionally painted orange drapery, the equally flat golden seat and the patternised background create a decorative space. The wealth of details, ornamentation and heightened clarity reveal the irrelevance of three-dimensional reality, in aesthetic space formulation.

'Prince Khusrau in his twenty fifth year

Fig. 58 Reading youth with falcon.

Fig. 62 Two dancing girls.

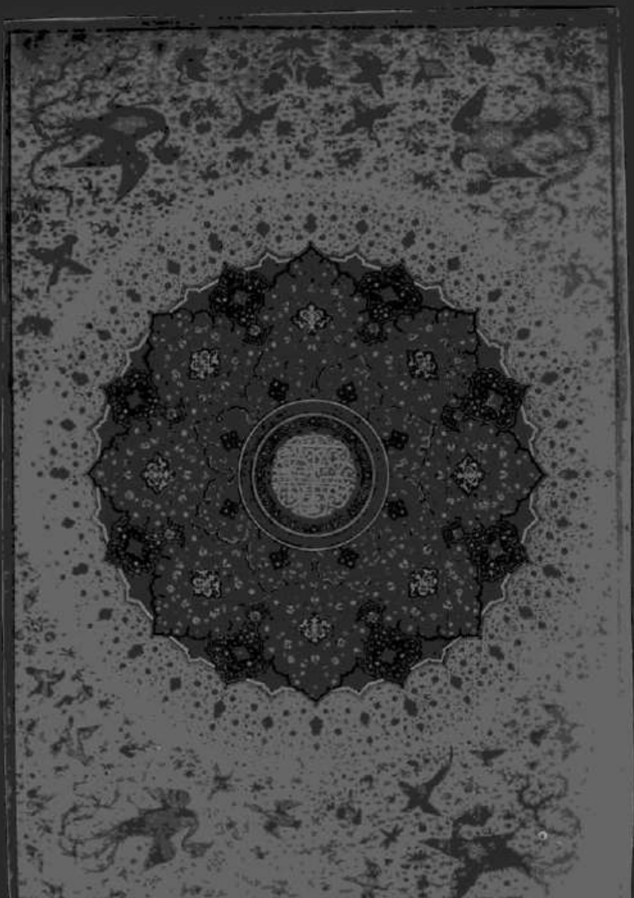


Fig. 63 'Shamsa' of 'Sunburst'

The painting, 'Two dancing girls', is a well balanced composition that shows an aesthetic use of space, created through formal properties of art.(Fig. 62) The centralised dancing girls fit comfortably within the oval space. This shape is echoed in the dance posture. Their pose offers symmetrical balance to the composition. A slight colour variation indicates the horizon. The background is flat and plain. Space around this oval area is divided into bands forming an elaborate hasiya. This space ornaments the picture with its intricate floral motifs, that are in striking contrast to the plain background within the oval. Balance, rhythm and decorative detailing are notable features in the painting. The picture offers no space recession. Nor does it imply a specific background for the dancing figures.

'Shamsa' or 'Sunburst' (Fig. 63) closely resembles the 'Two dancing girls'. It serves as a foil to set off forms and augment the

general design. In its space organisation and minute definition it is closely related to the previous painting.

A jewel like statement of symmetrical balance and perfect harmony is witnessed in 'Shamsa'. Harmonious forms and colours matched with utmost care prove the artists skill in presenting striking designs. Purely two-dimensional forms stud the picture plane. Abstract and stylised natural forms are creatively woven into a well co-ordinated design. With the chief desire of creating ornate arabesque designs, this painting comes into existance. The picture plane is used to house this beauty. Design, order and surface pattern are the essential elements in the painting. It is a purely decorative painting with no story telling element. However, even in a narrative painting such as

'Two dancing girls', similar elements are present.

The 'Portrait of Shah Daulat', is an exercise in contrasting colours and unique spatial types.(Fig. 64) The flat dark background sharply contrasts with the brilliant white robe of the saint. The background implies no indication of definite space. The There is no line to denote the ground. The painting ishows a few elements studded on an aesthetic stretch of space.

The figure reveals no modulation. This flat vertical blue back drop reveals no time or place. It is marked by heightened ambiguity and hence implies a sense of mystery. The man walks in a territory that is not of this earth.

The hasiya, one narrow and enframing the painting, and the other flanking three sides also occupy equally flat space. Interlacing floral motifs and brightly coloured flowering plants punctuate the space. It is highly decorative in contrast to the mystic space in painting. A contrast of mystic, simple space and a decorative ornamental space is witnessed in the painting.

When the subject portrayed necessitated equal emphasis on two or more elements the picture plane is at times sectioned into units. The division of space is often unusual and abrupt, but the picture space is well utilised, investing equal accent on elements. This is witnessed in the painting 'The trees - jaman & kamrak', (Fig. 65) Inscfiptions become part of the painting and augment the decorative element.

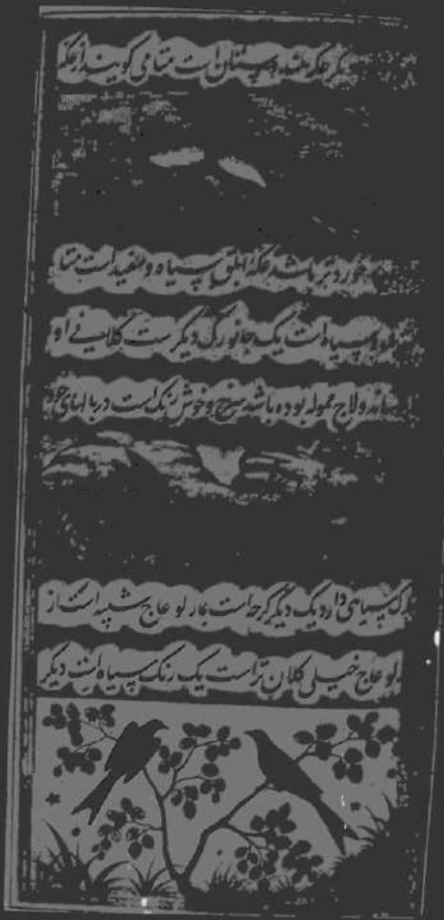
In the painting, 'Water animals Sipsar - seapigs', the picture plane is once again divided into two sections.(Fig. 66) Here the

Fig. 64 Portrait of Shah Daulat.

Fig. 65 The trees - Jaman and Kamrak.

Fig. 66 Water animals Sipsar - and Sea Pigs.

Fig.. 67 A variety of magpies, wagtails and swallows.



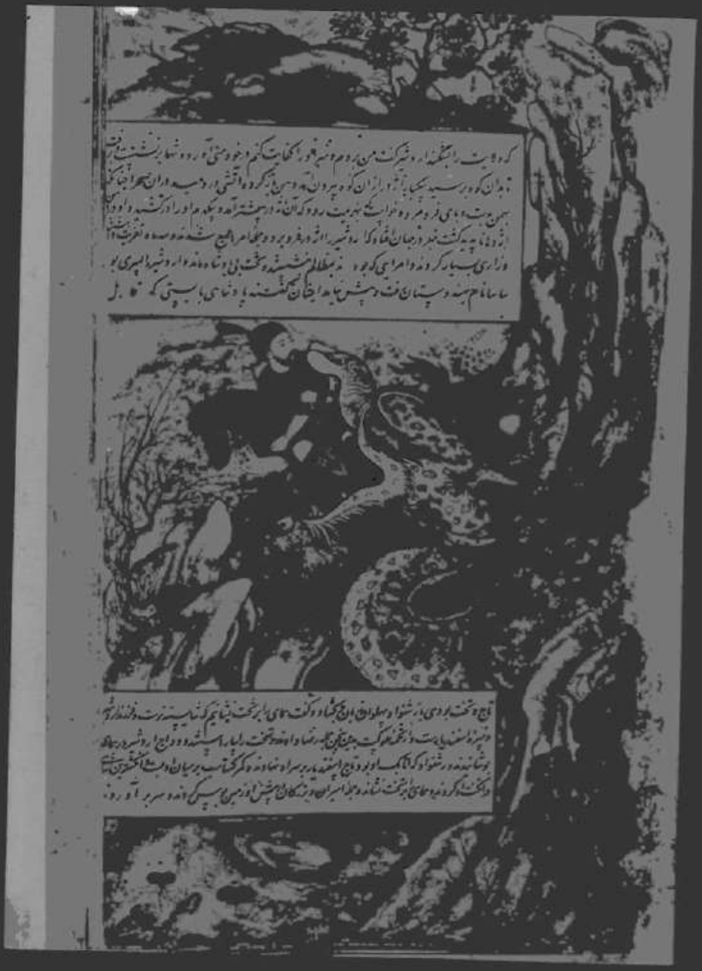


Fig. 68 Shah Ardashier's fate.

same space is continued with just an inscription interrupting the continuity. Space in the painting is used solely to portray the two imaginary acquatic creatures. The river is placed on a vertical drop of space. It seems as if the horizontal is lifted to show the vertical. Only this enables the two animals to be portrayed in all their glory.

'A variety of magpies, wagtails and swallows', is a painting showing three divisions, with interspersed inscriptions.(Fig. 67) To break the monotony of the picture space, the width of bands is varied. The space occupied by the three pairs of birds is simple and flat. Each band of space obtains equal emphasis. In the top and bottom bands even the boughs of plants do not move in and out, but flatly only upwards.

Fig. 69 Hanuman carries a mountain of healing herbs.

The painting, 'Shah Ardashier's fate', portrays a mythological subject showing the pitiable end of Shah Ardashier.(Fig. 68) The picture space is carefully but boldly interrupted by two inscriptions. The space offers no recession. It however rises vertically on the surface of the painting. It guides the eye along the surface space alone.

'Hanuman carries a mountain of healing herbs', shows two-dimensional treatment of space. (Fig. 69) This Mughal miniature displays the artist's compositional skill in using well balanced forms. Mountains are depicted at the top and bottom of the picture plane. Trees are well organised on the rocks supported by Hanuman. They bend elegantly forming a fan like spread around the rock. The blue backdrop is flat. It is indicative of no time or place. It is a sheer expanse of flat colour.

'A thoughtful man', is placed against a two-dimensional cut-out lawn and sky. (Fig. 70) The vertical backdrop is sprayed by decorative flowers devoid of change in proportion, colour and value. It leaps upward flatly, stretching on the surface. It makes no attempt to recede in space. A few objects that punctuate the space, spell out some arbitrary ground space among them. The figure appears equally flat, like a cut-out.

Narration and description of stories or nature here has become insignificant. The element of interest is sustained on the surface, with the well composed, ordered harmonious and balanced forms. Such principles are abstract and appeal to the aesthetics senses. One is then in the territory of pattern and design, order and aesthetics.

'Inayat Khan dying', emerges in stark simplicity and boldness.(Fig. 71) It appears

Fig. 70 A thoughtful man.

Fig. 71 Inayat Khan dying.

Fig. 72 The study of birds including a pair of common Indian Mynahs.

to be an exercise with shapes in space. Flat, colours fill large cushions and drapery. These interesting shapes are juxtaposed against stark white sheets. They spread along the surface of the picture. An ambiguious placement of the white pillow to the right foreground triggers a spark of doubt as to whether the cushion is placed on the bed or floor?

Wall and floor meet at the centre of the picture. Both appear like vertical backdrops. On this fairly stark backdrop, severe, boldly coloured forms are balanced and ordered. They accent the solemnity of the movement. Essential forms are presented on the flat space.

'The Study of birds including a pair of common Indian Mynahs is an exercise in pure aesthetics.(Fig. 72) The space is unorthodoxly classified into three units. Each unit is

fitted with a pair of birds. These are adjusted a little, overlapped once and balanced . A gentle jutting out of the tail beyond the picture plane, a slightly exaggerated tilt of birds and a studied irregularity in space division reveal the artist's aesthetic discovery. He has mastered the art of placing forms in the picture plane. He has acquired favourable results in carefully juxtaposing forms and seggregating space; not for him the shackles, depicting natural space. He presents instead a poem in aesthetic space.

The Mughal artist did not strive to capture the likeness of nature. He did not aim at portraying a 'true' image of forms dispensed in 'real' space - the external appearance, the skin of form and the extent of visible space.

He however, strived to capture the essence of forms on the two-dimensional picture space. He portrayed reality as he knew and understood it to be. Yet, more than that, he portrayed form and space as he wished it to be seen.

CONCLUSION

Mughal miniatures having garnered notable spatial types from several traditions, yield to an efficacious synthesis of these. These spatial devices were the tools in the hands of the well trained Mughall artists.

Mughal artists worked from an intuitive and instinctive understanding of space but not from scientific and analytical stand point. Artists placed forms at different levels and overlapped them, inspired by his intuition and propelled by his instinct.

The artist was lead by the content that was to be portrayed. He did not wish to

present a naturalistic space that draws the eye into the canvas. He did not open a path before the spectator for him to venture into the pictorial space, to travel and be part of the space created. Such an experience would be a mere immitation, illusion and an extended vision of our space.

He however, projects a conceptual view of nature. The artist organises forms in specific units by dividing the picture plane. This creates a surface pattern along side and an ordered composition. It moves the eye along the surface from top to bottom and from side to side causing surface tensions. Hence the surface space sustains interest and these ordered cells contain much information.

To the Western artist it was important to present the theme in natural space. For the Mughal artist however, the theme obtains much significance and determines the space on which it is to be enacted. In this

instance space ceases to be an element of nature. Emperors and nobility seem to have been empowered to dictate scale and spatial types. The artists brush seems to have been guided by the hierarchical importance of the subjects be portrayed.

The Western concept of space shows traces of its influences on Mughal art. However, the Mughal artist made only little excursions and attempted to portray naturalistic space. Instances are rare.

Hence Mughal miniatures did not aim at reflecting a mirror image of reality. Nor is it founded on the rudiments of creating visionary naturalistic space. It however calls for more than a visionary understanding of space. It is one that is based on idealistic formulations and requires profound perception. It invites the spectator to view the picture and meditate on its many layered intention.

Mughal miniatures stem from Eastern thought. While being intimately linked with creating idiomatic expressions. Thus, the spectator is presented with more than just 'real space', such as a casual peep over walls; an occasional blow-up of figures; an unusually isolated character; or a manipulation of scale and interrelated proprtions witnessed in space.

The crux Mughal miniatures lies in its mental image of reality. An image of idealistic beauty, of profuse decoration and of a skillful handling of the formal elements of art. Hence it requires a complete participation of mind and senses to view and relate to the space in Mughal miniatures. These are more significant than merely the outer appearance of reality; form, and spaee occupied by form.

The Mughal artist does not denote realistic space, which hardly matters, being trivial and incidental. He however, extracts the essence of space, which is vital. He dispensed form in a space that was best suited to portray it. What matters to him is the ideal and the essential. These are the eternal.

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